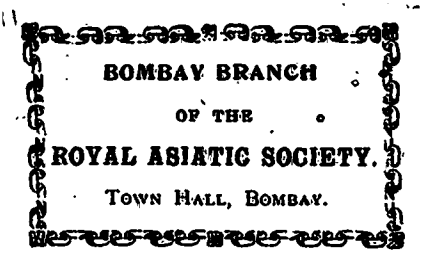
00023765



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FAMILY.

23765

BY

LORD WILLIAM PITT LENNOX,

AUTHOR OF

"FIFTY YEARS' BIOGRAPHICAL REMINISCENCES."

"Ficta voluptatis causâ sint proxima veris."
HORACE.
"Fictions to please should wear the face of truth."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1864.

The right of Translation is reserved.

00023765

LONDON:
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

"Consumptis opibus vocem, Damasippe, locasti
Sipario, clamosum ageres ut Phasma Catulli
————Populi frons durior hujus,
Qui sedet, et spectat triscurria Patriciorum;
Planipides audit Fabios."—*Juvenal*, Sat. 8.

"Poor Damasippus, whom we once have known,
Dashing with coach and six about the town,
Is forc'd to make the stage his last retreat—
And pawns his voice, the all he has, for meat;
For now he must, since his estate is lost,
Or represent, or be himself a ghost."

DRYDEN.

I THEN turned my thoughts to the stage, and started off to a large town in the north, in the

hopes of getting an engagement. Upon arriving, I hastily sought the manager, and sending up my card, was shortly ushered into his presence.

Mr. Robinson was a stern, portly-looking man, who eyed me as I entered, from top to toe, and politely, yet distantly, requested me to be seated.

"What is your pleasure, young man," said he, as folding his richly-brocaded but rather faded dressing-gown over his knees, he ensconced himself in a state chair, that evidently was used for dramatic purposes.

"I am anxious," I answered, in rather a tremulous voice, "to make my appearance on the boards of your theatre."

"Humph!" exclaimed the great man, "and pray to what line of business do you aspire?"

"Romeo, Faulconbridge, Iago, Sir Giles Overreach," I replied; "Mark Antony——"

"Hold," said Mr. Robinson, pompously; "my son has identified himself with all those characters. It would therefore be impossible for me to find you an opening, even if your powers, which I have no

right to doubt, come up to your exalted notions."

"If those parts are engaged," I meekly answered, "I am perfectly willing to take secondary ones, especially in a company which can boast of so bright a luminary as Mr. Robinson, junior."

This small dose of soft sawdor seemed to produce some slight effect, for the manager unknit his eyebrows, and in an encouraging tone requested me to favour him with the celebrated speech over Cæsar's dead body. I was elated, for I always considered this oration as my master-piece of pathetic declamatory eloquence. With a throbbing heart, and a nervous trepidation, I began,

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears."

The manager was all attention—a look of approbation gave me courage—I proceeded.

"I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him."

Another smile gave me additional courage; I went on, and when I arrived at the lines, "Yet

Brutus says he was ambitious; and Brutus is an honourable man," I inwardly felt that I was equal if not superior to Charles Kemble.

"Thank you, young man," said Mr. Robinson. "Do not think me unkind."

My heart sank within me, my face elongated.

"But if you have any friends, return to them, follow any trade, any business, any employment, but think no more of the stage—you never can become an actor."

Disheartened and wretched, I took my leave, and for days and nights brooded over the disappointment I had met with. I now found myself so "hard up" for money, that no alternative was left me but to seek some employment, or to go to the King's Bench. Every morning did I pore over the advertisements in the newspapers, in the hope of finding some lucrative situation, and often did I read of secretaries being required at salaries varying from two to four hundred pounds a year, to which, when I replied and offered my services, I received an answer stating the necessity of my

investing at least a thousand pounds in the concern.

At length, after many miserable moments, my attention was called to a notice in a newspaper devoted to theatricals, to the effect that a gentleman was required to take the parts our continental neighbours call *les jeunes premiers*, at a handsome salary. For years had I been devoted to the drama, and although my histrionic powers had only been called into action at an amateur performance at Cambridge, "my soul was in arms, and eager for the fray."

Losing no time, then, in addressing Mr. Fitz Orville Langworthy, manager of the Wolverhampton and other provincial theatres, I entered into an engagement with that gentleman for three months certain, at a salary of twelve shillings a week, and half a benefit after deducting the expenses of the night, at any of the leading towns in his circuit. A list of parts was then forwarded me for the opening night, and, after some consideration, I selected *Alonzo* in the tragic play of "Pizarro," and *Delaval* in the farce of "Matrimony."

I had been assured by the manager that the wardrobe was excellent, and that everything was as well conducted in the theatres in his circuit as in the two patent metropolitan winter ones. With a palpitating heart, a slender wardrobe, for I had parted with some of my best clothes, and five pounds in my pocket, I started for the scene of my triumph or failure—dirty, dingy, smoky Wolverhampton.

Amateur acting is all very well, very delightful, and very gratifying to one's *amour propre;* the plaudits of friends, the shouts of laughter from the packed audience of servants and dependants, the fulsome congratulations of the host and hostess, the exaggerated compliments of the *corps dramatique*, however, are very apt to lead the novice astray; and it is only when calm reflection takes hold of the mind, and the question is put to one's own self—"are my talents of a sufficiently high order to insure success from a paying and discriminating public?"—that an honest reply is likely to be given.

It is true, that I had often been told I was a second Charles Kemble in light tragedy, and equal to Richard Jones in genteel comedy; yet when I judged of my own powers by comparing them with those of other amateurs, I frankly own that fear and anxiety completely overpowered every other feeling. Nor were these apprehensions decreased when, after a journey partly on foot and partly in a carrier's cart (a waggon would have been a more Thespian conveyance,) I entered the town of Wolverhampton.

I deposited my small portmanteau at an unpretending-looking inn close to the theatre. Here, on conversing with the landlord, I learnt that the members of Mr. Langworthy's company did not stand particularly high as good paymasters. I satisfied my hunger, and on inquiring for a lodging likely to suit the state of my finances, was referred to a Mr. Smithson, who kept a small barber's shop in Lichfield Street, within a few yards of the stage-door.

The English "Figaro" did not confine himself

to mowing the stubbled chins of the unwashed mechanics, or to trimming the capillary ornaments of the more refined of his patrons; he had a soul above the razor and the scissors, and often appeared on the boards, especially when a benefit for the "Lodge of Fortitude," of which he was a distinguished Past Master, claimed the support of the public.

On such occasions Brother Smithson, P.G.M., decked out in a handsomely decorated white and blue apron, with two brilliant medals upon his breast, delivered an address, which was loudly applauded by the brethren in the house.

Upon entering the small tenement on the ground floor, which was adorned with a few theatrical prints from the majestic John Kemble in "Coriolanus," down to the inimitable Joe Grimaldi in "Mother Goose," Mr. Smithson met me with a gracious smile and a ready quotation.

"Health and the happiness of many days attend upon your grace."

Taking up the lines, I proceeded to add,

"My lord, I come an humble suitor to you, 'tis in behalf of a bed during my engagement with our worthy manager."

"Have I the pleasure of addressing the new light comedy actor, Mr. Altamont?" inquired the barber—for out of respect to my family I had changed my name.

"You have," I responded.

Holding out his hand, he gave me a masonic grip, and finding that I was one of the craft, proffered his assistance in any way agreeable to me.

"Permit me to introduce you to my better half," continued Mr. Smithson, as a lady of very prepossessing appearance, and with a profusion of curls, that would have furnished an excellent advertisement for her husband's "oleum pascens," made her appearance.

"Mr. Sneer, my dear—my dear, Mr. Sneer, or rather, Mr. Altamont, whose histrionic powers you have already heard so much of, and who, I hope, will give us the inestimable favour of his services

on the night of our annual appeal to the public, our benefit being fixed for the fourteenth of June, under the patronage of several persons of distinction."

"Permit me to show you to your chamber," said Mrs. Smithson, in a rather stilted tragedy tone; "'tis small, yet snug."

After agreeing as to the price, six shillings a week, attendance and lighting included, I availed myself of my host's offer to walk over to the theatre, a rehearsal of both pieces having been called, for eleven o'clock.

The temple devoted to Thespis in those days was situated in the Swan Yard, and could not boast of much architectural beauty. It was a plain brick building, with no exterior ornament save that of the arms of England, somewhat rudely carved in wood; while the interior had its usual complement of pit, box, and gallery seats, a gaudy red and white proscenium, a faded green curtain, with scenes from the bard of Avon's principal creations coarsely painted on the front panels of the boxes,

forming the new decorations so loudly extolled by the manager in the bills of the day.

"Mr. Langworthy is in the box-office," said the man at the stage-door.

His duties were multifarious, for he had not alone to act as Cerberus to this eagerly sought-for entrance, but to deliver bills, go on in processions, shift scenes, light and snuff the candles, attend to the heavy rolling thunder, hail-storms, and lightning, run for porter, and make himself generally useful.

Upon entering the box-office, which was a small den, four foot square, partitioned off from the lobby, we found Mr. Langworthy engaged in looking over the plan.

"A beggarly account of empty boxes," said Mr. Smithson, aside, as he cast his eyes over an almost blank sheet of foolscap paper. "Permit me," he proceeded aloud, "to present Mr. Altamont to you, sir."

The manager bowed, and eyed me all over, blandly saying,

"Happy to form your acquaintance, sir. My agent in London, Mr. Kennedy, speaks highly of your talents."

"Clear the stage," shouted the stentorian voice of Mr. Pemberton, prompter, stage manager, and representative of old men's parts, "it's five minutes after the time."

"Let me conduct you to the green-room, Mr. Altamont," said Mr. Langworthy. "Please call at our lodgings for my Rolla's wig; and if Mrs. S. likes to have an order for two this evening, she has nothing to do but to send round to me at four o'clock."

Following the eminent tragedian to that privileged room, the entry of which is so much coveted by amateur loungers, I was introduced to Mrs. Fitz Orville Langworthy, and the corps dramatique, and a more chilling or north-side of friendly welcome I never received. The manageress curtsied formally; Miss Ada Fitz Orville Langworthy, her eldest daughter, looked contemptuously at me, for having, as I afterwards discovered, taken the

part of *Alonzo* from her devoted swain, Mr. Montmorency; Mrs. Dewdesley, who did the old women's characters, scarcely deigned to notice me, but I fancied I overheard a remark from that lady's shrivelled lips :—

"No figure, and not at all a stage face."

Miss Bertha Fitz OrvilleLangworthy, the wonder of the Terpsichorean art, as she was termed in the play-bills, indulged in a loud titter, in which she was joined by Miss Macclesfield, a somewhat antiquated *prima donna,* with a May-pole form, and a voice like a penny trumpet.

Mr. Pemberton met me with a grunt, and a very ominous shake of the head; Mr. Delaveld, after eyeing me all over, hurried away in evident disgust. This sexagenarian, was known by the name of Proteus Delaveld, from his versatility; having, in early life, performed for his benefit, "Ranger." Between the acts he delivered a lecture on the Drama, played a solo on the violin, sang the "Death of Nelson," and danced a hornpipe. At the end of the comedy he

recited Collins's "Ode on the Passions," acted *Sir Fretful Plagiary* and *Don Ferolo Whiskerandos* in the farce of the "Critic," and concluded with a poetical address to the audience.

Mr. Montmorency met me with a rude stare. Mr. Balders, the low comedian, with a wink of the eye. Mr. Donavan, the Irish, Scotch, and Frenchman, with a jerk of the head. Mr. Gifford, the walking gentleman, with a supercilious smile. And Mr. Portal, the "generally useful," with a cold bow.

Even Mr. Harmon, the leader of the band, who presided over two out-of-tune violins, one spasmodic flagoelet, and a rumbling violoncello, treated me with a contemptuous look. Indeed, the only persons from whom I received the slightest civility were Joe Haines, the door-keeper, and the two scene-shifters, who touched their hats and caps to me, exclaiming that they hoped "the genilman would pay his footing, and stand something handsome."

During rehearsal, every impediment was thrown

in my way; one declaring that "he had never seen the part done in such a manner; another "that I had not studied from the proper book;" a third "that I cut him out of his best bit;" a fourth "that the whole affair was a regular hash;" Miss Ada Langworthy giving me the severest cut of all, by asking me whether I really meant to act my part as I rehearsed it, adding that, if I did, she rather guessed that I should be reminded of Michaelmas fare, before that *goose*tronomic period arrived.

Ada had been prompted to this witticism by her disappointed admirer, Mr. Montmorency, who had descended from the lofty character of *Alonzo* the brave Spaniard, down to the humble Peruvian *Huasca*.

Disheartened with the rehearsal, and the evident prejudice that existed against me, I thought it prudent to conciliate, at least, one party, and, therefore, screwed up my courage sufficiently to ask Mr. Langworthy to take a chop with me at the "Peacock Tavern." This little civility produced

the desired effect, and, in accepting the invitation, that gentleman proposed a visit to the wardrobe.

"We have some splendid dresses," said he; "and as for scenes and properties, no London theatre can exceed us. Excuse me for five minutes," he proceeded; "I'll just step over to our lodgings, to tell Mrs. L. I do not dine at home."

Left to myself, I began to look over the highly-extolled theatre and decorations. The green-room was a small, ill-shaped apartment, built out in a narrow court, painted, or rather daubed, with distemper compounded of blue and yellow, and furnished with two broken tables, four rickety chairs, a cracked mirror totally devoid of quicksilver, a tin chandelier covered with tallow drippings, a stove that emitted more smoke than heat, and a bust of Shakespeare in plaster. The highly-extolled scenery was as far inferior to the exquisite productions of Clarkson, Stanfield, Roberts, and William Beverley, as was the acting of Mr.

Langworthy in the Peruvian hero to that of John Philip Kemble; while the properties consisted of three horn drinking-cups, two rusty guns, a gilt pasteboard goblet, a crown made of silver foil, four gaudy banners, a bowl marked "poison," with the usual complement of swords, daggers, wands, and staves.

Mr. Langworthy presently re-appeared, accompanied by his majestic lady, who, smiling graciously, invited me into the managerial room.

So far so good, thought I. The dinner has brought about this change, and while ruminating upon the old saying, that the best way to an Englishman's heart is through his mouth, I was asked to follow the Rolla of the evening up a rather perpendicular ladder, that was fixed behind the left-hand stage door. Mounting the steps, we entered a small den, which in reality was an upper proscenium box, used as the sanctum of the manageress, and wardrobe room, excepting on the engagements of London "stars," when it was appropriated to their own especial use.

"I think," said Mrs. Langworthy, "the crimson and gold dress will suit Mr. Altamont admirably, and I shall be happy to lend him my Spanish hat and feathers."

I was all thanks, and had nearly made up my mind to include the whole family in a dinner invitation the following day, when the splendid costume was handed down from an upper shelf by the fair hand of the lady herself. It was made up of coarse serge of a brickdust hue, trimmed with common cotton velvet—which reminded one of Lord Normanby's remark on a lady who appeared in a *robe de velour*, that the texture was English and the lady's habits sedentary—tarnished lace, dingy spangles, and faded ribbon. The hat was what would in these days be termed a "wide-awake," of light drab-coloured felt, with one side turned up, and ornamented with a corroded steel button, and two feathers that had once been white, but which now partook more of a sooty than snowy appearance; the boots, of the period of the second Charles, were considerably the worse for

wear, full of cracks and holes, and the crimson satin that adorned them proved the perishable nature of the material, while the blade of the sword had lost its lustre, the scabbard all its brightness, and the handle, stripped of its counterfeit jewels, was completely pitted in small holes all over.

Such was the costume in which I was to make my first appearance in public.

"You'll find," said the manager, who had watched my look of dismay, "that it will appear quite another thing at night; indeed, we always find—don't we, Mrs. L.?—that the worse dresses show by day, the better they come out by candle-light."

"Unquestionably, my dear," echoed the obedient wife; "besides, my dresser, Mrs. Mitchell, will brush it up a bit, and Mr. Haines, our property man, will take care that the sword is repaired—it seems rather difficult to draw."

Impossible was the proper term, for not all my strength could extract it from its indented sheath.

"Mrs. Wharton!" exclaimed the lady, as she

opened a small wooden loop-hole (which was always used by the provident manager's wife to count the house at night, so as to prevent any defalcation of the money and check-takers) and addressed her box book-keeper, "How does the plan look?"

"Not very well, madam, as yet. Mr. Spreckley has just sent to secure the front row of the centre box, but as he always uses his debenture tickets, I have told his messenger they are engaged. I have this moment let Mr. Ives, of the 'Peacock,' four seats in number six, and I have promised not to fill up the opposite one until I hear from Mrs. Saunders, whether their party will arrive in time for the performance."

The note I had despatched to the worthy landlord, ordering soup, fish, a steak, and a bottle of old port, for two, had evidently produced so great an effect upon his mind, that he had determined to attend my *debût*.

"Although the free-list is suspended to-night," said Mrs. Langworthy, "and performers' orders don't go—another reason for my unpopularity with

my brethren of the sock and buskin—you will of course pass in the gentlemen connected with the press, Mrs. Smithson and friend, Mr. Stokes, the butcher, and his daughter, and Mr. Tucker, of the 'Cricketer's Arms,' who has promised to send his small marquee for Pizarro's tent."

I now took leave of my employer, until four o'clock, the hour named for our dinner, but not before I had expressed a hope to his sposa, that on some early occasion I should be honoured with the company of herself and daughters to explore the ruins of Dudley Castle, and partake of a cold collation, to be provided at my expense. A gracious smile rewarded my liberal proposition, and anxious to exchange the cold damp air of the theatre, tainted with the rankest compound of villainous smells—rancid lamp oil, greasy "dips," fusty coverings to the seats, stale orange-peel, rotten apples, and coarse tobacco—for a purer breeze, I left the dramatic temple, and wandered out of the town along the London road, a strolling player on life's rugged path.

Reflection now took possession of my mind; again the question of failure or success agitated it, and threw me into such a chaos of thought, that I should most certainly have unconsciously walked into a deep, fœtid ditch, had not a friendly arm caught me by the shoulder. On starting up from my reverie, I found that I was indebted to Mr. Smithson for my escape from impending suffocation.

"Fair sir, you are well-overtaken," shouted my landlord. "I would fain speak of the players."

When encouraged so to do, he proceeded to enlighten me as to the characters of the respective corps dramatique; pointing out that, like the rest of the world, they were not exempt from human frailties, cheering me with the assurance that the great Edmund Kean had been similarly treated, and assuring me that if I proved (as he had no doubt I should), successful, the hatred, jealousy, and uncharitableness, would at once be converted into fulsome adulation.

As the hour of dinner was approaching, and

Mr. Smithson having relieved me from all embarrassment by pointedly telling me he had partaken of that meal, he conducted me to the "Peacock," where he took his leave, but not before he had promised to meet me in my dressing-room to rouge me for the stage.

At the door of the tavern, I was met by the landlord, who conducted me into a small parlour, close to the bar, where I found Mr. Fitzorville Langworthy already seated; the dinner was served, the fire burned cheerfully, and the manager was in a vein unusually sociable. Following the custom of those days, when the cloth was removed, I desired the waiter to beg Mr. Ives would favour me with his company over a glass of wine, a request which was immediately acceded to, and, filling bumpers, the success of the new actor was drunk with three times three.

After settling the score, and satisfying the waiter, who ventured on the original remark that I was quite the gentleman, I received the thanks of the buxom hostess, and a smile from her assistant

Hebe, and then proceeded to the theatre in a state of anxious trepidation.

I pass over the period that elapsed from the time I had taken my seat in the green-room to the moment when the shrill voice of the call-boy exclaimed, "Alonzo wanted—next scene." Summoning up my resolution, I made my appearance, and was received with a hearty welcome from a very fairly filled house.

"On their own merits, modest men are dumb," so says the worthy Doctor Pangloss, and following the example of that erudite authority, I will confine myself to saying the applause I met with was far beyond my fondest expectations, and the ovation that succeeded the fall of the good old green curtain was truly gratifying to my feelings.

"A hit, a hit, a palpable hit!" exclaimed my friend, the perruquier.

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said the representative of Rolla, somewhat elated with the "beeswing" he had imbibed. "I'll put the new tragedy that has made such a sensation at Drury

Lane into immediate rehearsal, two excellent parts for you and your humble servant, and one admirably adapted for you, my dear."

The latter part of this sentence having been addressed to his better half, who, seeing, as the saying goes, "how the cat jumped," came up to express her delight at my unqualified success.

I then proceeded to dress for the farce; was told by Mr. Donovan, "that I had coaled it." I reappeared on the boards with fresh courage and renewed vigour, was loudly applauded, and was pronounced by all, before and behind the curtain, to have made "a tremendous hit."

An invitation to myself and the manager, to sup with an influential gentleman of the neighbourhood, at the "Swan," was brought to me by Joe Haines, where I found a substantial meal provided, the enjoyment of which was prolonged to a late hour, by the supplemental aid of pipes and bowls of punch.

Byron went to bed and awoke famous, and following the example of that great poet, when I

opened my eyes the morning after the play, I felt that I had achieved a success, which would, at the lowest calculation, enable me to pay my debts, and live independently.

It was wonderful to witness the sudden change of manner in everyone, save and except my excellent host; who told me in the most ingenuous strain, that whether I had failed or not, his house would have been open to me, and suggested that, now I had become a great man, it might, perhaps, be advisable to seek for a better lodging.

Thanking him for his disinterested views, I replied that during my stay at Wolverhampton I should not vacate my quarters, and that remark reminded the good-natured tonsor that a gentleman from Birmingham was waiting to see me.

"Pray take him to the 'Peacock,'" said I; "and tell Mr. Ives to prepare breakfast for two; I feel as hungry——"

"As a French falconer," continued Smithson. "And to-morrow we hope to give you up the front and back drawing-rooms; you will be more

comfortable there than in this attic, and it will be more respectable too."

Completing my toilet, and throwing a handsomely-embroidered Spanish cloak over my shoulders, I proceeded to a neighbouring draper's shop, to purchase a new five and twenty shilling beaver hat—for four and sixpenny silk gossamers were unknown in those days—and a pair of Worcester gloves, and then, with erect step, walked across to the tavern.

The landlord touched his hat, and welcomed me respectfully; the landlady looked unutterable things; and Sarah Woodhouse, or "Sarey," as she was usually called, dropped the coffee she was grinding, to smile at me, as I passed in front of the bar.

Upon entering the parlour my visitor, who was seated before the fire, rose, and presented me with a card, upon which was written,

"Mr. Duncan McGopus,
"Theatre Royal, Birmingham."

The accent of this gentleman, as he apologized

for his early visit, at once showed that he was a "canny Scot," and after inviting him to partake of the morning meal, to which he seemed nothing loth, he opened his business with me, which, divesting it of his exaggerated compliments, was to ask me to accept a starring engagement at Birmingham, Coventry, and Leicester, as early as my arrangements would enable me to do so.

"The terms will be the same we give Messrs. Kean, Liston, Braham, and Sinclair—half after the expenses, and a clear benefit; or, if you prefer it, I shall be happy to arrange for a fixed sum."

Thanking him for his liberal offer, I pointed out that I could make no engagement until after I had seen Mr. Fitz Orville Langworthy, who, at that very moment, realizing the saying of "speak of his Satanic Majesty and he will appear," was announced.

A look of disappointment, mingled with anger, came across the countenance of the latter gentleman when he saw his rival, McGopus, sitting in

friendly acquaintance at the table, swallowing cups of hot coffee, and devouring buttered rolls and muffins, very much after the manner of *Mr. Jeremy Diddler*, in that excellent farce of "Raising the Wind."

A distant recognition took place between the managers, when I placed Mr. Langworthy at his ease, by saying I should be guided by his advice, as to my future arrangements, and that gratitude to him and the Wolverhampton public would induce me to remain with him so long as my name proved attractive, more especially as I was tacitly pledged to study a part in the new tragedy that was then enjoying so great a run at Drury Lane.

"Nothing can be more honourable, Mr. Altamont," continued the delighted last comer. "And that reminds me—after the success, the unparallelled success, of last night, I am bound to offer you not only a choice of characters in that and other pieces, but to enter into an entirely fresh engagement, of which we will talk anon."

"I shall be happy, too, Mr. Altamont," he added blandly, "with your permission, to come to terms with my friend, McGopus. I have no doubt but that I shall be enabled to submit an offer that may turn out to our mutual advantage."

The North Briton looked pleased, and dates having been referred to in their respective pocket-books, they, before I had returned to the room from ordering dinner for Smithson and myself, had come to terms, subject to the approval of the principal, for my visiting McGopus's circuit, after the conclusion of another month's season at Wolverhampton.

"I told you, sir, last evening," said my first acquaintance, the perruquier, "that all would go well. I saw at once, by your rehearsal, that you had some excellent dramatic stuff in you, and when at night you 'gave us a taste of your quality,' I, on the spur of the moment, remarked to Mrs. S., 'Well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.'"

I thanked the worthy fellow for his discernment and kindness, when, with a delicacy of feeling which reflected greatly to his credit, he proceeded:

"Excuse me, Mr. Altamont, I hope you will not be offended, but, in your new position, after—I say after—the hit you have made, it might lower your dignity to be seen with a poor tradesman like myself."

Extending my hand, and grasping Smithson's, I exclaimed, in a tragic tone—

"'Prosperity's the very bond of love;
Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together
Affliction alters.'"

"Thank you, thank you, sir," he responded, trying to check the tears that would, spite of him, flow down his cheeks.

"Farewell," I continued, carrying on the conversation in quotations—

"'Within this hour, it will be dinner-time,
Till that, I'll view the manners of the town,
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings.'"

Taking temporary leave of the worthy fellow, I strolled through the town; and, from the flattering reception I met with from all, my best hopes as to the success I had experienced, were fully realised.

In the meantime, the press had been extremely kind to me; and one criticism, though less flattering than the others, pleased me more than I can express. In praising my performance, it pointed out that if I wished to retain a hold upon the public, it must be by strict attention, arduous study, and unwearied energy; remarking that, however glorious my first attempt had been, the slightest indolence, carelessness, or inattention, would hurl me down from the high pinnacle I had reached.

> "They that stand high have many blasts to shake,
> And if they fall, they dash themselves to pieces;"

and, so in conclusion, warned me against the dangers of sudden elevation, and the temptations which all so courted by the world would be subject to.

The second evening went off with even greater *eclât* than the first; the manager's sanctum (the

one in which I nearly broke my leg in first ascending) was given up to me; and every member of the corps dramatique, from the great Fitz Orville Langworthy and his better half, down to the candle-snuffer, paid the greatest attention to the "star," who now shed its light in the theatrical hemisphere of Wolverhampton.

Time circled on; and, anxious to redeem the promise I had made to Mrs. Langworthy, of giving her and the company a *fête champêtre* on the first disengaged day; and fortune favouring that event, inasmuch as "the preparations for producing the new tragedy on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, rendered it compulsory on the manager to close the theatre for a night" (so said the mendacious posters, the real reason being the arrival of a celebrated equestrian troup for one performance), I at once sent out my invitations.

All were gratefully accepted, and having given Smithson a *carte blanche* to order a repast worthy the occasion, and procure vehicles to convey the sons and daughters of Thespis to the ancient ruin,

I engaged an open barouche for myself, intimating to Mr., Mrs., and the Misses Fitz Orville Langworthy, a request that they would honour it with their company, and communicating to the devoted lover, Montmorency, that a seat on the box with one of the young ladies was at his service.

The morning arrived, and nothing could be more propitious than the weather; the sky was bright and clear, the air was fresh and exhilarating; and, as the carriages drew up to the stage door, great was the excitement of the assembled crowd.

"Brayvo, Balders! Tune up, Nosey!" shouted two urchins, who had climbed up the lamp-post, as that unrivalled comedian handed Miss Macclesfield into a pair horse coach, from which the words "Wolverhampton and Birmingham" had been covered over with a painted board, of the colour of the panels. Then followed Mr. Portal and Mrs. Dewdesley, Messrs. Gifford and Hayman preferring the outside. In the second conveyance, which was a light, large, spring cart, Joe Haines, his two scene shifters, and the gentlemen of the

orchestra, took their places, the property man having previously stowed away sundry pieces of canvas, curtains, flags, and banners, which were to decorate the tent to be erected under the united auspices of Mr. and Mrs. Smithson.

Not wishing to form part of a procession which looked too much like that of the grand entry of some wild beast show, I had ordered the barouche to my lodgings, where I was joined by the "roof tree," the branches thereof, and the swain who I had superseded in his histrionic parts.

Upon handing Mr. and Mrs. Langworthy to their seats, the latter playfully reminded her daughter Ada, that two front box seats were reserved for her and Mr. Montmorency. The lover approached, when the young lady, with a dignified wave of her hand, and a haughty look, spouted forth, in a true tragedy style:

"The air is too keen, my sister Bertha is more warmly clad. Mr. Altamont," she continued, "allow me to take the remaining seat by your side."

"Faithless woman!—Ada, they name is inconstancy!" muttered the eminent tragedian, as he assisted the younger sister to mount the box; not before he had cast a look of defiance at me, the unconscious cause of the jealous feeling that had come over him.

During the entire journey, Miss Langworthy looked unutterable things at me, "gazing her heart away," as she afterwards poetically described it to Miss Macclesfield, "upon one, as cold as the ruin we were about to visit."

Anxious to drive away the jealous pangs that had taken possession of poor Montmorency, I addressed the whole of my conversation to the manager and his wife, hoping that the difference that evidently existed between the lovely Ada and her affianced, would, like all lovers' quarrels, end amicably; indeed, I went far enough to propose exchanging seats with my rival, a proposal that was rejected by the scornful beauty inside.

Upon reaching the ruin, which was picturesquely situated near a shady wood, I proceeded to offer Mrs.

Langworthy my arm, and expounded to her the historical associations connected with it. I expatiated upon the origin of the castle in 760, pointed out that at the Conquest it was given to William Fitz-Ansculph; and how, during the contention between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda, it was fortified by Gervase Paganell, for the purpose of resisting that usurper. I then referred to the Civil Wars, when it became a royal garrison, and stood a siege of three weeks, until it was relieved by a detachment of the King's forces from Worcester; concluding my road-book narrative (for I was indebted to Dugdale for my information, got up for the occasion), with a graphic account of how the venerable pile became neglected, and served as a retreat for a crew of coiners, who, on the eve of St. James's fair, July 24th, 1790, set fire to the buildings, but whether accidentally, or with design, was never known.

"Fitz," said my companion, as I was about to refer to the Benedictine Priory, "Mr. Altamont has told me all about the castle—Odo and Dodo,

Roger de Somery, Edward II., Humble Ward, Charles I., and the coiners. Would it not make a startling melodrama? Grand tableau! Escape of the coiners! Denouement! Conflagration of the Castle, and ruins of the Saxon Fortress!"

"How I envy you, ma!" said Miss Langworthy. "Do pray, Mr. Altamont, tell me the history of that priory; was there ever an Abbess there, and real nuns? Oh! would that I were there, 'in shady cloister mewed,' chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon!"

With this somewhat garbled quotation, Ada looked quite the heroine of domestic tragedy, and heaving a deep sigh, wiped, or at least pretended to wipe away the falling tears.

"Sensitive creature!" said the mother, who now began to see that her eldest daughter had transferred her affections from Montmorency to myself; she continued,

> "What's the matter,
> That this distempered messenger of wet,
> The many-coloured Iris, rounds thine eye?"

"Nothing, ma. My grief lies all within—'tis past. Mother, lend me your pocket-handkerchief."

At this sudden descent from the ideal to the real, she applied the embroidered cambric—a property one, generally used in "Othello"—to stop the crystal tide that trilled down her cheeks, adorned with rouge and pearl powder, producing the same effect that irrigation would on a red clay, or chalky soil.

In the meantime, Mr. Montmorency seemed to follow the principle of the French proverb, "*quand on n'a pas ce q'uon aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on á,*" and devoted himself to the younger sister of the faithless one, Miss Bertha, who danced and skipped about on the green sward like a fairy in a pantomime, or a nymph in a ballet, both of which characters the youthful *danseuse* was well up in.

We have all heard of "cupboard love." This might have been aptly called "part love," for by devoting himself to the manager's daughter, the aspiring actor was sure to reap the histrionic

reward, in the same ratio that those addicted to "creature comforts" indulge their epicurean propensities.

The sound of a bugle, which Mr. Harman had brought with him, reminded us that the repast was ready, and we lost no time in proceeding to the spot where the *al fresco* meal had been prepared. It was in one of those shady nooks that are alone to be found in England, with a small running stream close by, that Mr. Smithson, our quarter-master and commissary-general, had pitched his tent. With the assistance of Joe Haines, and his men, he had, with a most commendable forethought, so arranged our sylvan dining-room, as to be impervious to any of those summer storms which unexpectedly burst forth on the brightest day in our changeable clime.

The carriages had been formed into a hollow square, and, to protect us from the eyes of the curious, and the dust which a light breeze stirred about, remnants of curtains and painted canvas had been attached to the exterior; while an old

drop-scene, painted, or rather daubed over with red ochre and amber, *mis*representing the anxiety of the Pythagorean philosopher Pythias, for the return of his friend Damon, was extended over our heads to shelter us from the rays of a midday burning sun. Flags and banners fluttered gaily in the wind, and the horses that had trotted us down were tethered to a rail, to all appearance enjoying their nose-bag entertainment of hay, corn, and "chaff," an ingredient our entertainment was not free from, with the greatest gusto.

In order to produce a striking effect, Mr. Harman had arranged with his musicians to play appropriate airs during the afternoon, and a programme was drawn out worthy a civic feast. "The Roast Beef of Old England" was to summons us to what the Americans (on the authority of Fanny Kemble) call "spoon exercise." As a matter of course, the National Anthem was to follow the Sovereign's health; mine—the toast of the day—was to be ushered in with "See the Conquering Hero comes!" the Drama, coupled with

the name of Fitz Orville Langworthy, Esq., was to be succeeded by a song and chorus, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and the ladies were to be honoured with "Here's a health to all good lasses."

The name of Miss Macclesfield also appeared in the bill as having kindly consented to sing her popular ballad of "Robin Adair;" Mr. Balders was to favour the company with a comic song, and Brother Smithson had been prevailed upon to recite an ode written for the occasion, in which more than due justice was done to every member of the Wolverhampton company, from Mr. Langworthy, and the modern Roscius, as he poetically termed me, down to the call-boy and carpenters. The barber orator appeared in the apron and badges of his masonic craft, and called forth blushes and cheers as he administered his exhuberant doses of soft sawder.

Our dinner was very much after the fashion of the Saxon one described by the historian: "The table was oblong and rounded at the ends; the

cloth was a rich crimson, with a broad gilt margin, and hung low beneath the table,"—a stage property, which was used in all the banquet scenes. "The company sat upon chairs with concave backs,"—these had been borrowed from the "Shakespeare," "and were arranged much as at the present day, with the intention that to each of the ladies should be assigned a neighbour of the other sex. The dishes consisted of fowls and fish, of the flesh of oxen, sheep, and swine; the bread was of the finest wheaten flour, and lay in two silver baskets upon the table,"—the silver baskets were also properties. —"Their dessert consisted of grapes, figs, nuts, apples, pears, and almonds."

Seated at the head of the table, with Mrs. Langworthy on my right, and the fickle young lady on my left, all went "merry as a marriage bell," and, as a matter of course, the usual conventional sayings and the customary jokes were indulged in.

"Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once," was quoted by Mr. Portal, as, ex-

tremely hungry himself, he rushed to his seat.

"Now good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both," exclaimed Mr. Donovan, in a rich Tipperary brogue, as we sat down to our repast.

"When 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," remarked Mr. Gifford, as a very splendid rump steak made its appearance.

"Give me the cups, and let the kettle to the trumpet speak, the trumpet to the cannoneer without, the cannons to the Heavens—now the king drinks to Hamlet!" said my vice-president, the manager, as he filled a bumper of Champagne to my health.

During dinner, Miss Ada, who still continued to address me in a truly sentimental style, showed no symptoms of a loss of appetite, although she declared that she could not eat a morsel, and thus apostrophized between the intervals of devouring a large portion of cold pigeon pie:

"How much, Mr. Altamont, I should like to play—a little more crust, if you please—*Viola* to your *Duke*. What a lovely speech!—a small bit

of steak—'She never told her love; but let concealment,'—no more pigeon, thank you,—'like a worm in the bud'—Champagne, only half a glass—'feed on her damask cheek'—I'll trouble you for the mustard.—'She pined in thought; and with a green and yellow melancholy, she sat like patience on a monument, smiling at grief.' A little gooseberry fool, mamma. 'Was not this love indeed.'"

The cloth was now removed, and, following the example set me by my guests, I spouted:

"Give me some wine, fill full:—I drink to the general joy of the whole table."

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" the jingling of glasses, the clattering of plates, and the knuckle rapping, proved how much this toast was appreciated.

Others followed, among them "The Drama and Fitz Orville Langworthy, Esq.," who, after declaring that moment to be the happiest one of his life, proceeded to recite the well-known lines of the surly lexiographer, Dr Johnson:

"Hard is his lot, that here by fortune placed,
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;

With every meteor of caprice must play,
And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.
Ah, let no censure terr· our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice,
The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give;
For we that live to please, must please to live."

He then proceeded to expatiate upon my merits, winding up a somewhat lengthy and evidently prepared speech, with a very common-place quotation, "If I cannot command success, Sempronius, I'll do more, deserve it."

Cheers followed the above remarks, which appeared to me to be echoed from without. The manager again rose, and, in a stentorian voice, claimed attention, while he proposed what he said might be justly called the toast of the day. He then commenced an harangue, which would have probably lasted a considerable time, had it not been interrupted by an event which I will now, after a brief preface, lay before my readers.

To those who have a thorough acquaintance with the stage, it will be remembered that in many a pantomime, or piece of action, it was, and still is

the custom, to inform the audience of any startling event in the play, by unfolding banners with the sentiment, thus wished to be recorded, emblazoned upon them. Hence we have seen, "Spolatro is the murderer," "Manfredi is doomed to perpetual imprisonment," "The cup is poisoned," "Rozalva will avenge her lover, or die in the attempt."

To shew to what uses these scrolls have been perverted out of the theatre, we must introduce a little episodical anecdote of the late Andrew Ducrow, of Astley's Amphitheatre. This gentleman, anxious to pay a proper compliment to his company of equestrians, male and female, invited them to an entertainment very much after the fashion of the one I have recorded; the only difference was, that the spot selected for the day's pleasure was close to a river. Boat races were proposed, and the competitors had doffed their coats and waistcoats, when the manager's attention was attracted to one of them.

"Where's Mrs. D.?" he exclaimed, for we must give his remark verbatim.

Madame Ducrow made her appearance.

"Oh! Mrs. D., here's a pretty go! Why, I'm blessed if Jim, as looks after 'Beda,' didn't take off his jacket to contend for the wager, and I saw 'He dies by sunset' on his shirt, which has evidently been made out of the banners we had for 'Redmond the Renegade.'"

At the moment when Mr. Fitz Orville Langworthy was trumpeting forth my public talents and private virtues, and had arrived at a grand climax, we were attracted by a noise outside that resembled the war-cries of a tribe of Kaffirs.

"Time's up!"

"Open the doors!"

"Shame!"

"Manager!" and other angry ejaculations were heard in every direction.

"What can it mean?" asked Mrs. Langworthy. "Be kind enough, Mr. Portal, to step to the entrance and inquire the cause of this unseemly interruption."

"Unquiet meals do make ill-digestions, madam,"

responded this pompous individual, who was imbibing "potations pottle deep" of port wine. "I never step to entrances."

"Allow me to go," said Mr. Balders, who, suiting the action to the word, left the table.

"Brayvo, Balders!" shouted a crowd of urchins. "Just give us 'Sweet Kitty Clover.'"

"Shame! shame!" bellowed forth some dozen men and women, who were elbowing and shoving to approach the temporary dining-room.

"What is your pleasure, ladies and gentlemen?"

"Open the doors!"

"Imposition!"

"A regular do!" respontled the crowd.

"There must be some mistake," proceeded the low comedian, looking funny, and winking his eye.

"Take that," ejaculated a drunken woman in the crowd, as, with a good aim, she hurled a turnip at the speaker's head.

"Let me address them," said Langworthy, rising

from his chair, and moving in a manner that would certainly not have enabled him to undergo successfully the ordeal of testing sobriety aboard ship —that of walking the plank.

"Friends," he hiccoughed.

"Why, old fellow, you are rather the worse for liquor," interrupted one of the intruders.

"Hear him!" bellowed another.

"Open the doors!" cried a third.

"This is unpardonable, gentlemen, quite unpardonable, very unpardonable," continued the manager.

"Gammon! Open, or we'll save you the trouble."

Upon this hint, a sturdy young plough-boy, who was near the entrance, pulled the curtain aside, while others, following his example, presently stripped the scenes and canvas from our retreat, exposing to public gaze a party of strolling actors dining, that would, if equally well delineated, vie with Hogarth's celebrated pictures of strollers dressing in a barn.

Mrs. Langworthy gave a tragic scream; Ada fainted in my arms; the *prima donna* was in a state of hysterics, and Miss Bertha called upon her neighbour, Montmorency, to save her from a swoon, by administering a bumper of champagne. Joe Haines, and the stage carpenters, brimful of punch, were for showing fight, having armed themselves with walking-sticks and the postboy's whips.

Finding that the affair was likely to become serious, I went forward, and appealed to the ring-leaders, in a manner that came home to their feelings; when, after some little trouble, silence was proclaimed, I suggested that all angry feeling should be done away with, by a glass of wine or beer all round. This was joyfully acceded to, when a call for a favourite spokesman among the crowd was made.

"Here's our excuse," said the leader of the fray, a mechanic out of work. "You announce on this board" (producing one that Mr. Haines had unwittingly exposed to view), "'Doors to be open at six o'clock, performance to commence at half-

past.' We waited a quarter of an hour, and then became impatient."

"That's right," shouted the others. "All we wanted was fair play."

"And you shall have it," said I. "Those who can come over to Wolverhampton, shall have a free admission to the theatre any night during my engagement there; and I will extend the privilege to Birmingham, should I appear on those boards."

"Three cheers for Mr. Altamont!" responded the assemblage.

"And now," interrupted Mr. Balders, "if you really wish it, ladies and gentlemen, I will attend to your first call of singing 'Sweet Kitty Clover.'"

"Three cheers for Balders!" who warbled forth that then popular ditty.

Other songs and recitations followed, and the evening which had been threatened with an awful storm, passed off in calm serenity.

"We really did take you for the circus people," said the mechanic, "for your horses were all tied up in the green lane, and the flags and banners

were exactly what Mr. Woolford and his troup had, when last he was here. We trust you will pardon our mistake."

Peace being now completely ratified, we prepared for our departure, and no event worth recording occurred during our return home.

Many foreign ministers, many gartered nobles, many Corinthian pillars of the state, many representatives of the people, many magistrates, country squires, yeomen, artisans, and Londoners have visited this ancient ruin, but we doubt much whether, upon any previous occasion, there was half the fun and merriment excited, as was produced on the never-to-be-forgotten *fête* given by me to my brethren of the sock and buskin at Dudley Castle.

CHAPTER II.

"On peut s'etourdir sur ses malheurs, mais quelque force de l'ame qu'on ait, il est impossible d'effacer entierement de sa pensée le souvenir de temps plus heureux."

MADAME DE STAEL.

IT was at this period of my fallen state that I shrunk more than I had hitherto done from confronting myself with the recollection of those moments the love of Clara Hindley had rendered sacred. Whilst I was living in the whirl of dissipation, and was carried away by the eddying current of excitement, I could repress any symptom of calm reflection that manifested itself to me. I had but to plunge deeper into the stream of noisy

life, and rise to the surface with the train of my thoughts changed. But I was compelled to pass the greater part of the day in my own society; and it was only at times when I felt that it was materially to my own interest, that I could make up my mind to mix with the people so inferior to me in birth as were my brother actors.

I had lost all dominion over the current of my ideas. Sometimes I would find myself rambling far away, back into the recesses of the past, regretting time thrown away at school, lamenting the *début* that I made in the world of extravagance and thoughtlessness at Cambridge, and contrasting the position I held with what it might have been. But nothing of all this touched the tender chords of the heart. It was only when I found myself musing over those Elysian three weeks I passed in the Isle of Wight that I felt pangs of real grief.

I had done a great deal of "life" for my age, and had seen some of the highest as well as its lowest phases. It might have been said that I had enjoyed much pleasure, but I never loved gam-

bling for gambling's sake, and the frivolous amusements of youth are quickly forgotten when they are at an end. Those three delightful weeks were not forgotten. Those one and twenty days were the only truly and sincerely happy ones of my whole past life. But what years of grief had they entailed upon me!

Till now I had regarded the breaking of a heart as a mythical malady, but when the dreadful idea that, in all probability, I should never see Clara again, had fastened upon my mind, it preyed upon me night and day. There were moments when I felt that the current of my existence might stop suddenly.

I had long since ceased to receive any allowance from my father, and, in fact, had dropped all home correspondence, so that I was left entirely to my own ideas and my theatrical engagements. Had I died at this time there might have been found enough money on my person to defray the expenses of my funeral, but whether there would have been sufficient to put up a tablet, "Sacred

to the memory of Frederick Altamont, who died in this parish," is very uncertain; and my parents, in all probability, might have inserted ambiguous offers to forget and forgive in the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, without receiving any authentic account of what had become of me.

I continued to act, to my own credit and advantage, in many pieces, in which I pleased the good people of Wolverhampton, being called nightly before the curtain.

At length the evening of my benefit arrived. I was to be supported by the entire strength of the corps. A crowded house was expected, and the prospect of a successful night seemed almost certain. I undertook the character of *Jaffier*, in "Venice Preserved." A large audience had assembled at the rising of the curtain, much to my satisfaction. I had already appeared in the second scene of the last act, when just after repeating the lines:

"I'm the vilest creature, worse than e'er
Suffer'd the shameful fate thou'rt going to taste of,"

and was on the point of advancing towards the foot-lights, I caught sight of two persons, in the act of taking their places in the boxes. I had got half-way through the above sentence, and should have continued,

"Why was I sent for to be used thus kindly?"

when all power of utterance forsook me.

Generally speaking, my memory was so good that I hardly ever troubled the prompter, but now two or three times in succession was the cue given me. I could not proceed. The eyes of all the actors then on the stage were turned upon me. I seemed to have forgotten where I was, and to have lost all power of speech.

The audience of course perceived that there was a hitch somewhere, without seeing immediately what was the matter.

I had received a shock which it is somewhat difficult to describe; I had not lost stage-consciousness, neither had my voice suddenly failed me—only that from abject terror I shrank from again allowing it to be heard in its natural key.

The two persons upon whom my eyes had fallen —oh! heavens! I never shall forget that moment! —were Mr. and Miss Hindley!

What was to be done? I felt an inclination to rush from the stage, and brave the indignation of the gallery. Not for worlds would I have been recognised by Clara. To think that she should discover one whom she had once addressed as "dear George," the preserver of her life, and confidant of herself and father, gaining a livelihood on the sufferance of a provincial audience! I was prepared to bear a good deal, but not that! I could have endured an expression of pity, a slighting taunt, a disdainful look from an old college contemporary, or brother-officer, with resignation! Pride once wounded becomes submissive to its fate; but even on those unhallowed boards, I was intensely anxious to be spared this humiliation.

Meanwhile, the public were becoming clamorous. I summoned up all the resolution within me. Luckily, my disguise was in my favour. At length I proceeded in a key as unlike my natural

voice as I could command; and, amidst the groans and the hisses of the exasperated gallery and pit, got through my part without being recognised either by Mr. Hindley or his daughter.

"A Roland for an Oliver" was the after piece; but as my part of *Alfred Highflier* did not admit of my "making myself up" sufficiently to escape recognition, I was determined, in spite of the confusion which I was sure such an act at this moment would produce, to throw everybody over, and disappear. Having sent a message to the manager to say that sudden indisposition prevented my acting any more that night, I took my departure, and rushed home to my lodgings.

I passed a sleepless night; I had been in danger of suffering the most extreme penalty of degradation. The form of Clara manifesting itself to me at such a moment, had affected me more than if I had seen the most unearthly of ghosts. I had accustomed myself to love Clara, to worship her; but never till I suffered the present shock had I realised what it was to fear her. What I went

through during the performance I cannot describe!

Each time I summoned courage to glance in her direction, and ascertain that I was not discovered, I felt a momentary relief, so thoroughly did I dread the possibility of those beautiful eyes witnessing the sad reality of my fallen state, which up to this time I had only ventured to contemplate myself with perverted judgment.

This startling apparition, however, had one good effect upon me. It revealed to me the degradation of my position, and, come what might, I determined to give it up. I made another resolution, which I carried immediately into execution. I wrote to my father; my letter was a genuine and sincere confession, not concocted in the way I formerly did these sort of epistles in my riotous days, over a long cigar and a large fire.

A tea-cup without a handle stood in a fractured saucer upon the table, as premonitory signs of breakfast, and a few incongruous logs smoked in the grate of my room, on the morning that I put pen

to paper. I suppressed none of the circumstances of my case. I stated the sum of my liabilities to be, as they were, about twenty-five thousand pounds. I only asked for advice and forgiveness for the past.

I had just concluded my letter, and was about to convey it to the post, when the manager of the theatre was announced. I begged him to be seated. He refused, and in a manner quite the reverse of civil, informed me "that an event had occurred the previous night, consequent on my extraordinary conduct, which had never happened to him before. He had actually been compelled to return their money to the obstreperous tenants of the pit and gallery; and as," he continued, "it would be as much as my reputation is worth to reproduce *you* on the stage, I must inform you that the proceeds of your benefit are 'nil,' and you must seek employment elsewhere."

Much to his astonishment, I was perfectly calm, and signified to him that such was indeed my wish. Poor man! he had hoped that I should fall down on my knees before him, and that the

occurrence referred to above would turn to his own profit, inasmuch as he might be enabled to conclude a bargain with me on better terms for himself.

I was sorry for him. In me he certainly had lost a valuable article! but at that time I could not spare him much condolence, I required so much for myself.

The interval that elapsed before I received an answer to my letter, I passed, for fear of meeting Clara, in the retirement of my own chamber, much to the astonishment of my landlord, who could not make out, as he called it, what on earth was "up," and why I was so "down."

At length the answer arrived. My father had felt severely the intelligence my communication had brought him, but, like the kind parent in "The Road to Ruin," a comedy I had been on the point of selecting for my benefit, and which would have brought ruin upon me, was not inexorable. He was glad that I had adopted a false name, as, from my having done so, he said, publicity might, perhaps,

be avoided. The amount of my debts had not taken him completely by surprise, but so large a sum he declined for the present to pay. He was not angry, but, what was worse, he pitied me.

His letter contained a cheque for fifty pounds, and an urgent recommendation to go abroad at once, so drop all connection with the past, and avoid the probability of sooner or later being arrested. He kindly added that, if I took his advice, a fourth part of two hundred and fifty pounds a year should be transmitted to me every quarter.

Without hesitating a moment, I accepted his proposal, and started for the metropolis, where he had offered to meet me and see me off.

Passing hurriedly through the town, I beheld a face, the Jewish cast of which attracted my attention. It was that of Mr. Isaacson, who, I fancy, recognised me, and as I thought it very possible he might be already desirous of exchanging some of my autographs for something more solid, I did not stop to inquire after his health.

I found my father waiting for me. We started for Dover. Our conversation on the way down naturally turned upon the question of my affairs. Although for so long a time we had not met, nothing could be more kind than his manner. He proposed my remaining abroad for an indefinite time. I had then no desire to return. I was leaving behind me little that it was of any use to stay for, and I trusted that thorough change of scene would produce in me tranquillity of mind.

"I hope," said my father, "that in leaving England there is no act in your past career that, independently of debt and extravagance, weighs upon your mind, and upbraids your conscience."

It was a relief to me to think that there was not, but it is useless to deny that my heart was heavy. On arriving at Rochester, my attention was diverted from this subject by the landlord coming forward and inquiring if anyone bearing my name was in the carriage. I immediately answered in the affirmative.

"Here, sir," said the ostler, "is a letter which

was brought by a postboy a few minutes ago."

I broke it open. It was "From a friend of the family, to George Carlton, Esq.," and ran thus:—

"Return instantly, your father is lying dangerously ill."

As the reader is aware, he was sitting with me in the carriage, and, I may add, in perfect health. I saw through it at once! It was a ruse of Isaacson, to inveigle me back into his clutches, but the artful dodge had not its desired effect. Had I returned, I should have found the friendly Israelite, probably waiting to receive me in London with a suitable escort.

At Folkestone, I met an old friend whom I had not seen for years. It was Lord Arlington. He looked as hale and hearty as ever, and wore a French hat, and brown boots, whilst a leather money-bag, big enough to contain two or three brace of partridges, was slung round his shoulder.

He rushed up and greeted me in the most friendly way.

"What! you in this out-of-the-way corner of

the earth!" he cried. "I've been doing the Continent, and lost all my luggage in France. They manage matters so badly over there! I had all my things in a great trunk. You know the French for trunk is *malle;* and as you must be so infernally polite to all the officials, I said to a porter, on arriving at Calais, '*Puis je vous demander mon malle?*' The fellow answered, '*Monsieur, il n'y a pas de mal.*' That meant, you know, that there was no trunk. So here I am, without any change of raiment till I get to London."

I assured him of my sympathy.

He asked me where I was going. I informed him, in few words, the real state of my case.

"By Jove!" he replied, "that *is* a nuisance! I'll lend you some money."

I gratefully declined.

"Mind and write to us, old fellow," he continued. "And if you pine after Old England, come over and stay with me, *incog.*, as long as you like."

I thanked him repeatedly for this kindness. It brought the days of our old alliance over again. He was still the same good-hearted soul that he had always been, and apparently always would be. Heaven knows I wanted something to cheer me at this moment.

I went on board the steamer and took leave of my father, who left me with tears in his eyes. I also felt much emotion—dear old governor, he had done so much for me!

We started. It was a beautifully clear starlight evening. There was a melancholy stillness upon the face of the water, and the silence of the air was only broken by the measured motion of the paddle-wheel. I stood upon the deck, with my eye turned towards England. Now I was, in reality, leaving it, perhaps for ever; not with the object of seeking a little temporary diversion, by a few weeks' tour, to return, when sated with foreign travel. I felt it was a melancholy sight to see my native land receding from my view.

I had been on the Continent before, so there was no great novelty in quitting my country, and I felt the force of those lines of Wordsworth—

> "I've travelled far, to unknown lands,
> To lands beyond the sea;
> Nor, England, did I know till then,
> The love I bore to thee."

We reached Boulogne without any *contretems* by sea; and, not having formed any plans as to my ultimate destination, I put up at the Hôtel des Bains in that town, with the intention of staying there a few days. Having slept some hours, I got up, dressed, breakfasted, and sallied forth to take a look at the natives. Those who are not conversant with this little English colony in France are not, perhaps, aware that the "Etablissement" is the fashionable place of resort. I wended my way thither, and had not long moved among the rank and fashion collected there, before I discovered, in the act of haranguing a group of men, for the most part younger than himself, a personage whom, it struck me, I had met somewhere in the

course of my life, but could not, at the moment, remember where. His memory, however, it seemed, was better than mine, for, just as I was turning away, he rushed forward, and addressed me by name.

It was Horace d'Arcy.

He insisted on joining me, and informing me confidentially, that the reason for his being at Boulogne, was to discover some one who had swindled him out of a large sum of money; in which enterprise, I thought it extremely improbable that he would ever succeed, when I remembered how he had once done me out of five hundred pounds. He very kindly offered to be of use to me, in warning me against dangerous acquaintances, and introducing me to worthy ones, if I was going to stop. This piece of amiability, I need hardly say, I politely declined.

For those who are fond of studying the genus of broken-down bipeds, Boulogne offers a most astounding variety for observation. There may be seen the middle-aged dandy of the settlement,

who, compelled to deprive himself of many a luxury, still glories in the faultless polish of his boots, and his noble carriage—of person, we mean, he possesses no vehicle. The first rose that buds in the Department is found in his button-hole, the last one fades there.

There is the whilome owner of one or two track race-horses, who has talked so much about them and their doings, that he is looked upon as the Lord George Bentinck of the locality. There is many a specimen of the "done up" gambler, who keeps up his acquaintance with cards and arithmetic by playing all day long at whist—*sou* points.

"The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claims kindred there, and has his claim allowed."

The swell of other days, now broken down and forlorn. The suspicious-looking gentleman who is come over for sea-bathing, but who never bathes. The man of large imaginary property, whose boots and shoes are always so astoundingly ventilated. Then there are gentlemen who have run away with

other men's wives. Gentlemen's wives who have run away with other men, and the performers of other *faux pas* too numerous to mention.

Having remained two days at Boulogne, I determined to proceed. In my opinion, the wisest course during my pilgrimage abroad was to avoid the society of regular continental Englishmen; and had I remained at Boulogne, I must of course associate with many characters of the genus D'Arcy. I once heard of an English prize-fighter, who had taken refuge at Boulogne, in consequence of having had the misfortune to kill a man in a pugilistic encounter, getting up at a public meeting of English in that town, and prefacing what he was about to say by the remark, "we are all here for something;" and though there was much truth in his words, yet there was doubtless some present to whom this general remark must have been disagreeable.

I then went straight to Paris, where I stayed a few days. There I saw that those English who I happened to meet, stared at me at first as though I

was one risen from the dead, so thoroughly had everyone been mystified as to what had become of me for some time past.

Having passed a few days in "doing" the attractions of this beautiful city, the omission of which would have been really wrong, and having found that the life of a *flaneur* had, at all events for the time, lost all charm in my eyes, that my eyesight had grown obstinately callous to the faultless graces of the Parisian fair ones, and that the prettiest walking or driving advertisement of the latest fashion was thrown away upon me, I determined to give up to the daily frequenters of the Champs Elysées and Boulevards a little more walking room, by retiring myself from those gay scenes.

Thorough quiet, I felt, was the only thing to suit my peculiar complaint.

A dose of temporary retirement, either from business or pleasure, if only taken at the right time and in the proper quantity, is good for everybody. The metropolitan doctor, worn out by excess of labour and defect of sleep, occasionally prescribes

this remedy for himself, and in change of scene remembers not that multitude of distant pulses that he ought to be feeling. The man of law, wearied of defendants and plaintiffs, forgets on the summit of Mont Blanc all the briefs that are below him; and pleasure's most unsatiable gourmand is compelled, sooner or later, to refresh his fatigued palate by country hours and country air.

Feeling, then, the necessity of such a step in my own case, I started by the first diligence, and did not stop voyaging till I arrived at the town of L——, situated upon the prettiest lake in Switzerland. Having received from a friend in Paris a reference to a certain German lady and her husband, residing in this town, I immediately went to their house, and as they were not in the most affluent circumstances, on my asking for information respecting a lodging, they offered me an asylum in their own abode, which was beautifully situated on the borders of the lake, provided I did not consider their terms exorbitant. I agreed at once.

Madame Rëdern I was struck with as being a charming little person. Her age was, I suppose, about thirty. She had a most winning, lady-like manner, and spoke English with a musically foreign accent.

He, the great Herr Rëdern, was a jolly good-tempered German, with nothing very particular about him. His eyes were small, his cheeks large, with the usual amount of German redness. His frame bore unmistakable symptoms of being very capacious of beer; and his teeth, which looked as if they must be decidedly accustomed to tobacco, judging from their colour, might have been taken to be composed of meerschaum.

I felt "at home" with my new friends from the moment the plan was settled. Little Madame, who was always in the best of spirits, laughed when all was arranged, as if my arrival was the greatest joke in the world. I was made as comfortable as possible. The restorative arrangements of the day were, breakfast when you like, dinner at one, tea at six.

I found quiet life a charming substitute for excitement, and certainty for uncertainty. No fairy ever effected such a transformation scene on any stage; and at first, feeling certain that it could not be real, I put the question to myself, Which is the dream—the past or the present?

"Now, Mr. Carlton," said "little Madame" (as I used to call her), "the first thing you must do is to learn German."

She volunteered even to teach me; and I began, under her tuition, but she laughed so much at all my attempts at pronunciation, that I found, at the end of five or six lessons, the only progress I had made consisted in amusing her.

I spent no end of time in chatting with her, and I learnt a great deal more from her in that way than when she became professional.

With "The Herr" I was also capital friends, and won him over with a few English cigars, which he pronounced "zeer gut." Having taken some lessons from a regular master, by a little applica-

tion, I, in due time, commanded a tolerable supply of ready German.

Under the auspices of "little Madame," I bought a boat, and when I had decorated it according to my own fashion, the natives proclaimed the "Englander's schiff" to be the prettiest on the lake. When I think of the number of innocent hours I used to spend in my diminutive yacht, exploring distant creeks, visiting rocky islands, voyaging to picturesque hamlets, or moored in some shady spot, admiring the grandeur of the scenery, with a copy of Schiller in my hand, it seems difficult, indeed, to reconcile one period of my life with another, impossible to realize that one, once so ravenous after pleasure, could have settled down so contentedly to be the child of nature. I was content because I had nothing to worry me, and was happy in the enjoyment of freedom from anxiety and trouble.

At times, it is true, when my thoughts were rambling at their leisure from one subject to another, a passing cloud would come and over-

shadow me. The happiest time of my past life would appear before me. It seemed as if the scene was imperfect without the presence of Clara, and I wished that some oberland fairy would but charm her to my side.

Yet I could think of her more calmly than formerly. Had she been with me my feelings would have shewn themselves unaltered; but time works wonders! and when I think of the depth of my suffering only a short time back, I must admit that now my heart was, perhaps, to use a familiar phrase, "as well as could be expected."

I had lived with my German friends some months, and really believed I had every intention of staying there all the winter, when a circumstance occurred that made me change my mind. I used to be a constant attendant at the German Protestant chapel in this town, and sat opposite to a Baron Wallis and his wife. She was a very fine woman, not young, with large eyes, good complexion and features, dark hair, and an excessively English look. She struck me from the very first,

and I must own that my gaze was frequently fixed on her, and doubtless for a considerable length of time—in fact, more than it should have been; but how often in these cases is one blind to consequences, and ultimately a victim to one's rashness.

One Sunday, when service was over, during which I believe I had looked more steadfastly than ever upon this lady's countenance, and frequently a perceptible sigh had escaped from me whilst so doing, the Baron rushed up to me in an infuriated state, and challenged me to mortal combat. I inquired on what ground. He could with difficulty contain his anger.

"Because," replied he, "my wife confided to me, before service, that owing to the evidently designing addresses that your eyes have been in the habit of paying her for a long time, she has not dared to go out walking alone, for fear of becoming your victim. And to-day," roared he, "I have had an opportunity of judging for myself!"

My explanation was short and simple.

"Sir," replied I, "many miles away from here

I have a mother, of whom I am excessively fond, and I beheld such a striking likeness, that it certainly has given me great pleasure to imagine I was beholding my beloved parent when I was looking at your wife. I trust that this explanation will satisfy you."

I really believe that he was more angry than if I had owned to the worst intentions; whilst I am quite sure that Madame la Baronne would have infinitely preferred the latter.

The Baron still declared that he felt a stigma upon his honour, and I believe that had I stayed he would have compelled me to fight.

A few days after, on his recurring to the charge, I told him I should not fight upon so absurd a question, but that, as it suited me to leave the town of L—— at this time, owing to the excessive cold, and I intended going, perhaps he might choose to be satisfied, and be good friends. He was still but little inclined to treat. The matter, however, submitted to arbitration, was settled on my own terms.

Poor "little Madame" actually shed tears when I departed. We had been such excessive friends, and passed many hours together, whilst "der herr" was doing volumes of smoke in the garden, or beer at the Gast-haus. She was so intelligent, so lively and merry, that it was impossible to be dull with her; and I really believe that there was nothing she would not have done for me. I was very sorry to leave her. But there are "mauvaises langues" in mountain as well as low land; and had I stayed, I might have had the good, simple-minded herr rushing up, some day, from the Gast-haus, the worse for beer, and making everybody unhappy.

Poor little Madame! for her I felt one of those Platonic affections that some people say they don't believe in.

CHAPTER III.

" He who stems the tide with sand,
And fetters flame with silken band;
'Tis yet a harder task to prove,
With firm resolve to conquer love."

"*Rouge perd, couleur gagne*," "*Rouge gagne et couleur*," were the verdicts that the presiding *croupier* was every moment pronouncing to some twenty or thirty people sitting round the *trente et quarante* table at the Kursaal, at Homburg, on the morning I am attempting to describe. There is nothing singular about these proceedings, for the same words may be heard from eleven o'clock in the morning till eleven o'clock at night, all the year round, Sundays included.

There was, as usual, a great variety of people sitting round the long table, embracing members of every class of speculators—from the cautious amateur, who placed his thalers on the table with a trembling hand, to the determined *habitué*, who was confident of his "system," and laid out his gold and notes accordingly.

There were deputations from every country—England, France, Holland, Germany, and Spain. Russia, too, was represented; whilst exclamations every now and then of satisfaction or disappointment might have been heard, uttered in the nasal twang peculiar to the cosmopolitan Yankee.

There was a very large German prince, connected with the ruler of a very small German duchy. There was the Russian count, playing the highest of games, whose countenance was never known to betray either winning or losing emotion. The beautiful, accomplished, and knowing Parisian Madame Adéle, renowned for breaking "banks" in Germany, and hearts in Paris. The Fatalist,

from Holland, who had dreamt, the night before, of a "run upon red," and was confident that it would come off. The Countess of Arnheim, a lady of mystery, who never lost, and was supposed to be connected with the bank; and a miscellaneous collection of small-fry gamblers, bringing proportionate supplies of pecuniary grist to the mill of speculation.

But let us leave all these people to their several fates. Some of them will be ruined to-day, in all probability; and some will win to-day and lose to-morrow. Come, reader, and take a turn in the gardens attached to this splendid building. The band is playing; and the atmosphere is more healthy. It is true, that the weather is not of the warmest, but then the month is February; nevertheless, it is the warmest February that has been known at Homburg for years.

The sledges are all put by for another year. The lady of fashion looks no more like "a gentle savage," for she has ceased to wear her fur clothing, and the tender specimen of the other sex

no longer hides his diminished head in the folds of a worsted comforter.

As one stands on the raised ground connecting the Kursaal with the gardens, the *coup d'œil* is a bright one. There is plenty of sunshine above, and an abundance of fair ladies below; whilst an extensive forest, spreading far away into the distance, forms an excellent background to the pretty picture.

"I like the place," said young Cracknull, a lazy, lurching youth, who had once done duty in some dragoon regiment, but was now so thoroughly abandoned to what he called "*otium cum*," or what other people called "*otium sine*," that he was totally unservice-worthy.

This remark was made to a friend of his, a Mr. Clichy, who had lately arrived from Paris, where his numerous creditors had been subscribing for his maintenance in a government prison. But that was all over now, and he had nearly forgotten it.

"Yes, doosed nice place," was the latter's reply.

"Such lots of doosed pretty girls! And so long as one steers clear of those horrid tables, it is a very cheap place to live in. By-the-bye, have you seen that doosed good-looking girl, Miss Acton, just come from Berlin, or Dresden, or some of those places. They say she *will* have lots of money too!"

"Ah! that's what they always say," replied Cracknull. "Did you ever know a watering-place belle who wasn't to have a fortune? For my part, I like the smallest of certainties to the largest of uncertainties."

"Well, I could live in a cottage, for the rest of my life, with that pretty girl," said Clichy. "If worst came to worst, and she may be an exception, one gets so doosed tired of knocking about."

"Pshaw!" returned Cracknull, "I've seen so many fellows, in my time, going in for these imaginary good things, and what's been the result? Why, it's always the same. They find out the real state of the case when it's too late. A resolute father, or a big brother, comes forward. The

man is first compelled to marry, and then, if he has no money himself, is obliged to starve."

"But you look at these things in such a doosed matter-of-fact way," observed Clichy.

"Listen to me, my friend," broke in Cracknull. "I've been on the watering-place circuit for years, and my opinion is this—run a pretty girl round the German baths, with the word 'Expectations' ticketed on her back, and she will catch a flat before a week is over."

This conversation was interrupted by the approach of a very common-place looking English mamma, accompanied by two lengthy girls, who, from carrying their heads very much in advance of their bodies, and being eternally drest in a suit of shepherds'-tartan, had gained the appellation of the "Homburg Guinea-fowls."

Mrs. Allington, their mamma, exhibited them as frequently as possible before the public, and studiously ran away whenever she saw anything like a flirtation commencing between a Guinea-fowl and a gentleman, but as yet, no one had

manifested a serious intention to take one off her hands.

A series of "good mornings" were exchanged between Messrs. Cracknull and Clichy and this interesting trio. The young ladies had formed the acquaintance with the two men at a dance in the Conversation Room a few nights before, and had taken every opportunity of conversing with them ever since.

"Have you seen the latest list of arrivals, Mr. Cracknull?" asked Miss Jemima, the eldest, who, from her right of age, had taken her choice.

Mr. Cracknull was obliged to admit that he had not seen it.

"Oh! there are several new people," continued Miss Jemima. "There is a very pretty Swedish family, and Captain, Mrs., and Miss Acton."

"Oh! I have seen the latter party," said Mr. Cracknull.

"Oh! what are they like?—do they look nice? Is Miss Acton pretty?" enquired Miss Jemima, dwelling breathlessly on the latter interrogation.

"Yes, she is a pretty girl," replied Cracknull, much to Miss Jemima's disgust; "that is to say, she is considered so." On hearing which *post dict* the Guinea-fowl breathed again, inasmuch as it implied that the speaker disagreed with the rest of the world on the question of Miss Acton's looks.

Being encouraged to believe that this latter remark might be a slight indication of a game on the part of Mr. Cracknull, the young lady suddenly made up her mind to play a card herself. She selected, from those which she had in hand, what she called "a jealousy card"; and this is the way she played it.

"Oh, Mr. Cracknull, there has arrived, also, such a handsome young man! His name is Carlton; and mamma says she knows something of his family. I am looking forward so to making his acquaintance, as I am sure he is very nice!"

"Well," replied Mr. Cracknull, "I hope you will find him so. And you may rest quite assured

of this, that, if you do become great friends, you need never fear my being so disagreeable as to spoil sport."

This reply was given as honestly as it was meant, so, virtually, Miss Allington's game was over. She had most injudiciously thrown away the card that she prided herself on being able to play with dexterity; and one of two things was certain—either the ex-dragoon was not a marrying man, or he didn't mean to marry her.

While this little game was going on, and whilst Miss Barbara Ann, the younger sister, was "extending" Mr. Clichy on the gravel walk hard by, Mrs. Allington had gone on, trying to look as unconscious as she could that her daughters were not following her; and when she did think it right to discover that they were missing, of course it was the easiest thing in the world for an elderly lady like her, whose eyesight might naturally be dim, to go and look for them where they were sure not to be found.

"That's Mr. Carlton," I heard Miss Barbara

Anne remark *sotto voce* to her sister, as I passed them in the garden, making my way towards a seat where I used sometimes to rest and read a bit of Schiller, which occupation interested me far more than watching half the people that frequented the gardens.

I trust that the amiable reader of these pages will not be disappointed because I am not found to be the prodigal, reckless, incorrigible one of other days, feasting my eyes on the seductive green of those fatal tables, and clinging, like an infatuated gambler on the verge of ruin, to the vain hope that by some miraculous "coup," all previous losses will be recovered; or perhaps he or she may have expected to find me already subjugated by my evil genius, and fallen into the abyss of crime, instead of calmly meditating, as I did, over the perusal of a poem in the vicinity of a gambling-house.

The apparition which I had seen at Wolverhampton had certainly purified my mind in many respects. I could not bear even the sight of gambling, and I avoided passing through the room

whenever I could. I had chosen Homburg as a place of temporary residence, because I had never been there before, and had heard of its being a cheerful place to winter in. There seemed to be some nice people there, and a great many very questionable ones.

Hardly had I opened my book upon this very day, before I heard approaching footsteps, and looking up, beheld coming towards me three individuals, who evidently belonged to each other. One was a gentleman of about fifty years of age, neatly but shabbily dressed; his hat was of peculiar shape, his hair was particularly white, and his features good. He had a quick, nervous way of walking, and if he looked you straight in the face, it was but for a moment. No. 2 was the prettiest specimen of an English young lady that I had ever seen. Her form was the facsimile of the one described in the song as "the fairest that e'er the sun shone on." She had beautiful eyes, the iris of which resembled the richest tortoise-shell; most expressive and delicately-chiselled lips, a pretty little

nose, and a lovely complexion—an assembly of charms rarely found in one face! Her hair, which was in abundance, was inclined to brown; and her well-shod little foot would have made the fortune of any boot-maker who could have exhibited it in his window. She was, however, the direst little flirt that ever shot deceptive glances from an eye.

The third person was an elderly wizen little old lady, carrying a brace of small dogs in her arms, and having, apparently, some difficulty in keeping up with her companions.

I did not know who they were when they passed me; but I soon ascertained that they were the Acton family, and had lately arrived. I was first attracted by hearing the young lady, before she reached the spot where I was sitting, burst out into a good, hearty, unrestrained laugh at something the gentleman of fifty had just said. As she passed me, she had hardly recovered her equanimity, and her father looked as if he was anything but pleased with her. The old lady trotted along behind; and I could not help, I must say, allow-

ing my curious eye to follow the footsteps of the young lady for some seconds.

The next day I was in my old place, and about the same time of day, the same three people came by again; only this time the nervous gentleman was talking to the lady with the dogs, who was his wife, and Miss was walking behind. I hardly looked up as the latter passed, which clearly annoyed her, for she drew herself up, and walked away with an evidently dissatisfied look.

In the course of the day I met them again. Miss Acton, in an audible tone, was scolding her father as they walked along: the latter, pale and uncomfortable, was biting his lip, seemed afraid to say anything, and looked the personification of a daughter-pecked husband.

In passing me, Miss Acton's eyes were darting fire in every direction, some of which—it was my impression—was meant for me, though how I had offended her I was ignorant. She was certainly a lovely girl; but I regarded her somehow much in the same sort of unimpassioned way as I should

have done a pretty picture, or a handsome statue.

I now began to meet her continually, sometimes walking with a little German maid, and sometimes either alone with her father or mother. I hardly ever took much notice as she passed, but when I did look up, a strange fierce expression of dissatisfaction seemed to be always momentarily put on, which I could not understand, and she would walk away with a face that savoured of displeasure.

I said, in describing her, that she was a little flirt. I had no right to think so then by any means; indeed, I fancied several times that she avoided being introduced to two or three young men who were accustomed to conquest-making, and I heard of many self-vaunted lady-killers who were dying to know her.

One day, I was obstinately engrossed in my book, and, as she passed, her handkerchief happened to fall close at my feet. A little urchin, who was standing by, darted forward, picked it up, and presented it to her; but I remarked that he got very little thanks for his pains.

The day after, I arrived later than usual in the garden, and whilst I was still distant, observed her go alone, and deposit her muff on the very seat that I always patronised, and rush away. Being anxious to see what would be the result, I went and sat down as usual, took out my book, and began to read. Presently, back came Miss Acton, dragging her quiet little mother along with her.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, as she approached, "what shall I do?—I have lost my muff!" Then suddenly, most intelligently feigning sudden surprise at perceiving it at my side—"No, here it is!" she continued. "Doubtless this gentleman found it, and was ignorant to whom it belonged."

Of course I was bound to rise and explain that I had found it there. She thanked me not only with the prettiest of smiles, but also with her beautiful tortoise-shell eyes; which I acknowledged by expressing my happiness at her having recovered her lost property. She seemed delighted to have regained it; and in such a bewitching and charmingly innocent way still lingered on the subject,

that I must say I felt quite sorry when the little muff scene was over, although I was sure that it would lead to an acquaintance.

She insisted on thanking me again before she took leave of me, with a smile that few men could have regarded with indifference; and when she tripped away, looking happier than I had ever yet seen her, I am quite sure that I forgot my Schiller and everything else, till she was long out of sight.

The next day was a dreadfully cold one—far too cold to go and sit out of doors—however, I went all the same. I don't know exactly why, but my eyes were constantly down the footpath. At last, I descried one of the family approaching—not *the* one. It was the strange imperturbable Captain, gliding along at the rate of six miles an hour, ever looking flurried and grave, and seemingly always in a hurry. I felt inclined to get up, and ask him how his daughter was—and I don't believe he would have eaten me if I had—but I did not do so.

I was unable to remain long in the garden,

owing to the cold, and there was no attraction; but for something to do, I went over to Frankfort in the afternoon, which, as the reader is aware, is only four or five miles distant. I had become a tremendous hermit, avoiding the society of chance idle men, such a number of whom one meets at a place like Homburg, and caring little to interchange empty phrases with people indifferent to me. I had a German acquaintance, and two or three French ones, which I preferred to those of stray Englishmen, who are difficult to shake off, and frequently become of far too hand-and-glove a nature to be dropped, if necessary.

The next day was much warmer. Scarcely had I taken possession of my "reserved seat" in the garden, when the distant rustle of a locomotive robe conveyed to me the intelligence that a lady was approaching. On she came, running in the most accomplished style—her little feet plainly perceptible in spite of their smallness, seeming but to touch the ground with their shadow. She slackened speed as she neared me.

"Good morning, Mr. Carlton," she exclaimed, in a most cheerful tone; "I am taking my morning run, which the doctors say is very bad for me, but I always do it." Then looking back in the direction she had come, she continued, "I have left poor dear mamma such a way behind, I am afraid she will think I am lost."

"Good morning, Miss Acton," I replied, as soon as I could get a chance of speaking, and was in the act of making some laudatory comment on her excellent style of "going," when she stopped me with the abrupt question,

"How did you know my name was Miss Acton?"

I answered by inquiring, "How do you know my name is Mr. Carlton?"

"Ha! ha!" she replied, looking extremely knowing and very pretty.

At that moment her mother hove in sight.

"Oh! here comes mamma!" she cried, and away she started towards the old lady at a terrific pace.

Mrs. Acton, I saw, did not seem to have minded at all being left behind.

"Naughty child, naughty child!" I heard her say to her daughter, in the mock reproachful style in which one addresses a playful puppy; this vituperation was succeeded by a loud artless laugh on the part of Miss A.

As they were advancing, I got up and took off my hat to Mrs. Acton, who seemed perfectly disposed to be friendly.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Carlton, mamma," said the young lady, in a clear voice, at which mamma smiled, and turning upon her a gentle look of dissatisfaction, chid her thus:

"Rosie, Rosie, how can you?"

"How very fond you seem to be of reading, Mr. Carlton," said Miss Acton; "and always Schiller! Far too dry for me—I never open a book."

I asked her how she could possibly know what book it was that I read.

"Ha! ha!" she replied again, looking as knowing as a cockatoo with its head on one side.

"I read it, Mr. Carlton, out of your book, as I passed."

I made some remark upon the superiority of her eyes, at which she smiled, but didn't seem the least flattered; indeed, I afterwards found out that from having been made such a great fuss with, as an only child, at home, where everything she had said and done from her childhood had been looked upon as wonderfully clever, she did not value a compliment from any one, looking on it merely as a matter of course, and a necessary tribute; nevertheless, she was not really conceited.

"Do read a bit to me out loud," she said, with a most telling smile, "and let me see how you pronounce German."

During this time, almost without knowing it, I found that I had left my seat and was walking along with her.

"I'll promise not to laugh," she added, beginning to laugh though as she spoke, at the expected amusement of listening to my English accent.

"Will you read me a little bit first," I asked,

23765

"and then let me try and imitate your style."

"Oh! yes," she said, "if you will promise to criticise."

She then took my book, and began reading with the most perfect accent. I thought I had never heard German spoken so well by English lips before. She had been reared and educated almost entirely on the Continent. Her German maid spoke free from local dialect, and as I have heard Germans themselves say that their own language sounds more musical when uttered by a pretty English girl, I feel sure that I am speaking impartially when I say that Miss Acton's German was perfection; and when I assured her of this, as I did, I meant it thoroughly.

It was then that she told me how much she had lived abroad, the long sojourn that the family had made at different times at Dresden, Berlin, Toplitz, &c., and how strange it would have been had she not spoken well.

It was now my turn to read, and I felt excessively flattered when I found that she not only

kept her promise not to laugh, but declared that I pronounced very creditably.

That day I accompanied Mrs. and Miss Acton in a long country walk, such as they were in the habit of taking. Miss Rosa and I became great friends. I must own I liked her very much. She was so naïve and unaffected, and, compared with all other girls I had ever known, such a *nouveauté de demoiselle*—a peculiarity which would, most assuredly, have been stigmatised, by prudes, as forward and bold; but she was too original and natural for me to find fault with her.

I quite liked Mrs. Acton, too, who bore traces of having been very pretty in her day. She used to say little, and seemed to live more for the protection of her two canine pets, who, having seen many a succession of summers and winters, were now evidently "breaking," more from old age than from anything else.

I was even introduced to the imperturbable quick-walking captain, whom I found very gentlemanlike. He had formerly been in some fast English

regiment, when, like so many other people, he had lived a little beyond his income, and had wisely preferred retrenching abroad to "pulling up" at home.

During the conversation of this first walk, of course the words "Yes, Miss Acton," "No, Miss Acton," "Do you think so, Miss Acton?" and other such phrases, were perpetually crossing my lips. All at once she stopped me in the middle of one of them by exclaiming suddenly,

"Oh, Mr. Carlton, don't! My name is Rosie —short for Rosina. You *must* call me Rosie; or, if you insist upon a title, call me Fräulein Acton, it seems so much more natural! I can't bear that formal prefix, Miss!"

I immediately accepted the invitation, having myself, I must own, always had a weakness for Christian names. From that moment I endeavoured to drop the miss, and found that I learned my lesson with wonderful facility.

I was very soon on tea-table terms with the family, who lived in a pretty little villa just outside the town towards the Brunnen.

"Now then, young man," exclaimed the captain to me, as the tea-things made their appearance, the first time I went there (and who always seemed to brighten up in the bosom of his family), "no powdered footmen, you know, to hand round the cups on a silver salver. We live in a very aboriginal way, waiting on ourselves; and when tea is over, you and Rosie must help to put away the things."

"Nonsense!" put in Mrs. Acton, amiably shocked at the idea. "You'll frighten Mr. Carlton away if you talk in that manner."

As far as I was concerned, I felt I shouldn't half mind taking the captain at his word, and helping Rosie, with whom I always preferred chatting alone and no listeners for choice. I remember admiring her, more than I had ever done, in her evening toilette. In a plain white dress, with a band of blue ribbon encircling her waist, and her hair, simply done, drawn rather over her forehead, she looked far more charming than any pen can describe.

Yet I was not really in love with her. At no moment in her society did I feel for her what I had felt, and still did feel, for Clara Hindley; although at times, from being far away from the latter, I may have thought less of her, yet "a low voice" whispered within me that my affection for the absent one had taken the keen edge off my feelings, which nothing could ever reproduce. My sentiments towards Rosie Acton were of an uncommon kind. That I was, more or less, a victim to the language of her eye, that I was won over by her unaffected openness of manner and unconcealing candour as to her past, I must admit; but there was, I could not help seeing, an instability of character, and undeniable quaintness about her, charm though it had, which would have always made me hesitate ere I tumbled, instinctively, in love with her.

One day we were rambling along on the Wiesbaden Road, mamma and her dogs a little distance in the rear, when our conversation, I know not how—but then she was used to break off so singu-

larly from one thing to another—fell upon the subject of matrimony.

"Oh! I'm engaged, at this moment, to three people, all at once," said Rosie, with a wicked laugh, which she could always command, when saying something naughty.

"How very shocking!" I exclaimed.

One, she smilingly informed me, was an English officer, at present on foreign service; another was an Austrian officer; and the third was a barrister at the Temple, whom she had captivated after three days' acquaintance, during one of the short periods she had passed in England.

I could not help being astonished, and at the same time amused, at the jocose way in which she laughed and talked on this matter. She regarded half-engagements, made on the spur of the moment, and without thought, as mere embryo arrangements, which could never assume the matured form of matrimony. What might have been construed as most guileful conduct in her, and wanton tampering with honourable intentions,

was, in reality, nothing more than sheer thoughtlessness and love of fun. I don't believe she cared for any one of the three strings attached to her bow. She had been left so entirely to her own devices from an early age, had had so little opportunity of seeing the danger of forming great friendships with young men, and had been brought up so differently to other young ladies, it was only wonderful that she was the nice little thing she was.

Mrs. Acton, it is true, loved her daughter; but then she adored her dogs, and so long as the former was happy, and the latter comfortable, she was perfectly contented. Whilst the captain, too often occupied with pecuniary difficulties, and dissatisfied with his past career, only loved, in his reactionary moments of good spirits, to hear Rosie's merry voice, and humour her every fancy. She seemed to have perfect control over him, even in his low-spirited fits; if she only looked angry, and talked loud, there were few points that she could not gain; and when he was suffering from a sort

of nervous depression, as was often the case, seeing everything in dark colours, during which periods he would express his belief that Rosie's high spirits and want of consideration would some day bring her into some dreadful trouble, she would laugh away his fears, or wheedle him into good humour by the fascination of her manner.

I sometimes felt thankful that the memory of my unhappy love for Clara still haunted me, feeling that, had my heart been thoroughly free, I should, in all probability, have offered it to Rosie, after but a few days' acquaintance; in which case, like that of the trio above mentioned, I might have discovered, when too late, that it had been misplaced.

She was the idol of the few servants employed in the Acton establishment; she always contrived to ingratiate herself with the shopkeepers with whom she had dealings, and was, in fact, the darling of all those beneath her, with whom she came in contact. She played extremely well on the piano, and could draw excellently when she

chose; but the talent of hers which charmed me most, was when, after a great deal of coaxing, one could persuade her to sing some of her lovely German airs, my favourites among which were, "Wenn die Schwalben," and "Trenne nicht das band der liebe." But it was very difficult to get her to sing; perhaps it was as well, for under the influence of her notes I might have been guilty of the most rash acts.

One evening, at about half-past nine, when I was at the Maison Tivoli, which I forgot to mention was the name of their villa, Rosie was in the wildest of good spirits; and the captain suffering from an excess of bad ones, and a fit of his apprehensions, Rosie suddenly exclaimed, after having remarked on the beauty of the evening, the brilliancy of the stars, which she had momentarily contemplated:

"Mamma, I should so much like to go out and take a little walk. It is a sin to stay in doors such a lovely evening!"

"What! this time of night, Rosie?" asked the

captain. "Absurd, don't think of such a thing!"

"Mamma, dear," repeated Rosie, "will you come out just for half an hour, it will be such fun, and Mr. Carlton will guard us from all danger—won't you, Mr Carlton?" said she, addressing the latter words to me.

I, for my part, had no objection; but it seems Mrs. Acton had, for she begged "Rosie, dear," to let her off, owing to a fear of the night air.

Not yet daunted, Rosie made another proposal.

"Mamma, dear, let me put on my things and go and take a turn in the Strasse in front of the windows with Mr. Carlton."

The captain turned sharp round in his chair, as if he was shot; fixed a look of displeasure on his daughter, remarked, "Positively improper," in an indignant key, bit his lip, and fell back in his chair, looking more desponding than ever.

"Mamma, dear, is it improper?—isn't it absurd to say it's improper?" said Rosie; and "mamma, dear," who hated to differ with her daughter on any

point, immediately indulged in a laugh of acquiescence.

Again the captain turned sharp round, but this time he was cut short by Rosie.

"Papa, you're simply ridiculous," she exclaimed, in a loud voice, "making such a fuss about nothing at all; you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" and she knit her brow, and her eyes began flashing in such a way, that there seemed every indication of a storm.

"Oh! there's no harm, my dear, in going out for a short time," said Mrs. Acton, "if you don't go far. I'm sure your papa doesn't object to that."

But he looked sharp round again, as if he did object, in spite of which off rushed Rosie for her bonnet and shawl. On her return she went straight to the captain's chair, and said, in a persuasive strain, to the tenant of it,

"Was he disagreeable, then, to his Rosie? Rosie soon come back!"

But he bit his lip again, and looked extremely

unpleasant, in spite of this touching blandishment. Rosie then beckoned to me, and off we started.

When we were once out of doors, she seemed so amused at the idea, that it was with difficulty she could restrain her steps to a walking pace.

"What a splendid night!" she remarked to me. "Oh! how I do enjoy it! How I envy you men being able to walk out all night, if you like. I hope you don't mind coming out, Mr. Carlton?"

Of course I did not. It was such a pleasure to do anything for her. One got such lots of thanks, and genuine ones, too.

"We must not go too far," she observed, "or else they'll say we are beyond bounds."

So we turned round, and were actually retracing our steps, when we heard the captain's well-known voice shouting, "Rosie! Rosie!" as loud as he could, and then we saw him rushing down the road, first one way and then the other, in the most frantic manner. When first I heard him shout, I was on the point of crying out to let him know we were near; suddenly, Rosie made me a sign

to be quiet, and I was compelled to obey. Presently, back he rushed, in the direction where we were. As he approached, Rosie ran behind the laurel hedge that skirts the road, and beckoned me to follow her, which I did. He ran past us, calling her loudly by name. Rosie was delighted.

"Do let's give him a chase!" she exclaimed; with which words in her mouth, off she started, as hard as she could run, taking the road which led past the various springs.

I, of course, followed, endeavouring to persuade her to return—but it was of no avail. Onward she dashed, at such a speed that I could, with difficulty, keep up behind her. Luckily she knew the road well, and so did I, or we might have come in contact with some of the numerous trees that border the road. Every moment I thought strength must fail her, but distance seemed to lend fresh power to her endurance, and on she flew faster than ever.

We were already out of sight of Homburg,

beyond even the bounds of my geographical knowledge, and just as I had made up my mind to stop her, at all hazards, in this wild flight, my eye caught sight of something stretching across the road, which proved to be one of those toll-bars, so often met with in Germany. Rosie, unluckily, didn't see it, and charged it with such violence, that she was turned completely round, and fell powerless to the ground.

I immediately raised her head. It was some seconds before she was able to speak, and even then, at the first moment, she did not discover what had happened. She had broken the large bone of her right arm, just below the elbow, and it was only when she endeavoured to raise it that she became aware of what had befallen her.

"Oh! Mr. Carlton, what is to be done?" she exclaimed. "You don't know what pain I am suffering!"

But I did know, for I had broken my arm myself once, though hers appeared to me to be a very bad case indeed, for the bone seemed almost pro-

truding through the skin; and though I examined the limb, as gently as I could, she fainted.

What was to be done? Luckily I could see a light in the distance. I took her in my arms, and made the best of my way towards it. It proved to be a farm-house. Having roused the inmates, I informed them, in as few words as possible, what had occurred. They seemed extremely stupid, but honest. Rosie, to my horror, did not rally, and not a member of the family, although there were two or three women, could give a suggestion as to what ought to be done. Certainly something must be done, and I made up my mind to do it. Having given directions to lay her on a sofa, just as she was, and apply cold water to her temples, I started back as hard as my legs would carry me to Homburg.

I knew the abode of a medical man, and going straight to him, persuaded him to follow me at once to the farm-house where Rosie lay. A vehicle was procured, and we went back together. On our arrival, I was relieved to find her returned to

consciousness, though still looking dreadfully pale. Herr Arnold, who had brought the necessary apparatus with him, at once examined the broken arm. It was, as I feared, a bad case, being a compound fracture.

The setting, which was not begun till so long after the accident, when the arm had got stiff, was very painful, and the poor little thing seemed to suffer most acutely. When the operation was concluded, she appeared very much easier, and was soon collected enough to ask me how the accident occurred; but Dr. Arnold recommended her being kept very quiet, and forbade her talking too much.

"What a nice man!" said Rosie, when he had taken leave, promising to return the next day.

I was very glad to hear her praise him. For my part I thought he had acquitted himself rather clumsily; but she was always grateful for everything that was done for her.

She thanked me too, again and again, for all my kindness, and seemed disposed to talk over the

occurrence; but I remembered der herr doctor's injunctions, and recommended her to try and sleep, which she promised she would do. Knowing that she would not while I was there to converse with—for she did not seem any longer in great pain—I quitted the room. The first thing I did was to write a brief note to the Captain, apprising him of his daughter's position and accident, which I gave to a boor working on the farm to carry to its destination; but though I took extraordinary trouble to explain to him where he was to take it, and to whom he was to deliver it, I am afraid I made but little impression on his stupidity. Then I persuaded one of the women to sit up with her, and betook myself to the "salon," where, over a cigar, I thought over the extraordinary event of the evening, and passed the night in one of the most uncomfortable chairs that I should think was ever made.

Early the next morning I inquired after my patient, who, I was told, was very anxious indeed to see me. I went into the apartment where she was

lying, and found her extremely unhappy. With tears in her eyes, she asked me if I had taken any steps to acquaint "poor dear mamma," and "poor dear papa" of what had happened. She was sure they would be in a dreadful way about her.

I told her what I had done, and believing that my letter had not arrived, I undertook to start off at once for Homburg, and let them know what had occurred.

I saw the maid at the door of the house, so was saved the trouble of knocking. The Captain, she told me, was in the drawing-room. I went up and found him pacing about the room, looking dejected and sallow, with everyone of his white hairs apparently flowing in different directions. In fact, judging from his general appearance, he seemed to have been suffering from a bad night. It was clear that my communication had not reached him.

"Where's my daughter?" he exclaimed, in a theatrical strain, and with a fierce look, on beholding me. "Are you already married? What are

you going to live on? Where is she? Are you separated?"

I hushed him at once, seeing that his string of questions was far from exhausted, and addressed him thus:

"Captain Acton, nothing has happened to cause you any needless alarm. Your daughter, taking fright at your vociferations last night, ran violently down the road, and, I regret to say, broke her arm. She has been under proper medical attendance. Follow me, and you will see her in half an hour."

My intelligence acted like a restorative upon him, and the severity of his countenance vanished in a second.

"You don't say so?" said he, quite blandly. "Then there has been no elopement, after all?"

He then ran to the door, and hollooed to Mrs. Acton—

"Maria, Maria, Rosie hasn't eloped—she has only broken her arm!"

This brought the old lady downstairs. I ex-

plained fully how it was done, and instead of my being the ruffian, who had stolen the pet lamb from the family fold, as they had imagined, I was overwhelmed with thanks for the care I had taken of her. A carriage was ordered, and we were all about to start for the farm, when the Captain, who had had time to collect his thoughts as he brushed his hair, preparatory to departure, exclaimed, on joining me,

"Oh! I must tell you what I have done this morning. I only wish I hadn't; but I did it for the best. Believing that you ran away with Rosie, I went to the police, and laid information against you. And I am not quite sure, but I—I was so flurried at the time, I think I said something about the town-crier."

He then did penance for his folly by biting his lip; but that would not repair the mischief.

My plans were instantaneously altered. I saw the perils of my position at a glance. I ascertained from the Captain that it was hardly two hours since he had been to the police. For some

hours, at least, I was safe, then; but still there was no time to be lost. I had heard quite enough of German routine, in all matters of law and justice, to be desirous of having nothing to do with it. I knew very well what would be the result of this affair were I once arrested.

The complaint that I had stolen a young lady had been lodged, and before it could be withdrawn the order would have to pass through the hands of Heaven knows how many officials, one more dilatory than the other. Then the inhabitants of the farm, the doctor, driver, and everyone connected with the affair, would have to be examined, inquiries would be made by police agents to prove that the Captain's conduct was all fair and above board, &c., &c.; this would have taken probably a fortnight, during which time, on the principle that I was guilty till proved innocent, I should be maintained, in confinement, on very black bread and very bad water; and when I came out, people would good-naturedly remark of me for the rest of my life, "That man has been in a

German prison," without explaining why or wherefore. I, therefore, begged the Captain, before he started, to communicate with the police, and inform them that all had been satisfactorily explained. I made him promise that on his return from the farm he would go to my hotel, pay my bill for me and forward my luggage to Vienna, whither I directly set out in a carriage as far as Frankfort. Not, however, before writing a line to Rosie, to inform her of the urgency of the step, necessitated by the precipitation of her father, who, I felt sure, would come in for a good scolding from her for his pains. I trusted that we should soon meet again, and of course that she would speedily recover.

I must say I did not feel quite comfortable till I got out of the Hesse diocese, but I met with no annoyance, and arrived safely the next day at Vienna. My luggage reached me two days after. I found a letter among my things from my father, inviting me to stay with him at Paris, where he and my mother had just arrived, for some weeks.

I accepted his offer by return of post, and made immediate preparations for departure. Before leaving Vienna I also received a letter from Captain Acton, informing me that he had "squared" the police, and that Rosie was doing very well. It was a very kind note, and full of good feeling towards me.

There was a postscript, which had all the appearance of having been written by a lady, with her left hand. It ran thus:—

"Rosie's love."

Poor dear Rosie, she was a darling!

Shortly after this time she made what I believe was a very comfortable marriage. Since which event it has been my lot to see her more than once in the distance. Her form then had lost its sylph-like proportions, and I doubt if she could now go the pace that she did on that memorable night; but she looked happy and cheerful. I, too, have changed since those days, and we can both look back upon the past as upon a tale that is told.

In her character were ingredients which, had

she been well trained, would have insured her gaining a prize at any exhibition of eligible girls in the world. But still she would never have been Clara.

Rosie had certainly the most radiant beauty of the two, and was, perhaps, the most taking at first sight, but I should always have had misgivings as to whether she were not too "fast" to stay over the long course of a lifetime, and whether she would not have tired going up the hill of adversity.

With her good looks and winning ways, she would always have been attractive, and though I might have followed with the admiring throng, I am sure I should soon have retraced my steps and returned to my first love.

CHAPTER IV.

"To me no pleasure Beauty brings;
Thine eyes have scarce a charm for me."
CHILDE HAROLD.

WHAT a pretty sight it is to see a newly-married couple skipping into a well-appointed brougham, provided that the bridegroom is youthful and good-looking, and the bride pretty and nicely dressed. I always thought it one of the greatest temptations to matrimony. The *tout ensemble* of a slim coachman, a showy horse, and a neat little enclosure on light wheels, is a very pretty thing in itself; but the most ornamental cage is imperfect without a pair of goldfinches inside it, and so is the brougham without its turtledove occupants.

When I have seen such an equipage pulling up suddenly in London, and the newly-mated ones letting themselves out by means of the open sesame of an inside handle, or popping out of a doorway into the vehicle, and off in a second, it has often struck me that the proprietor of the whole concern was an enviable being; but then, as I said before, everything about it must be perfect, or else one's feelings are of a very different nature. Or when the gentle half stops and picks up her sterner half at some appointed spot, and the latter jumps in with an air of "all this is mine!" about him, there is something in the scene calculated to make the most confirmed bachelor lament his celibacy.

It was one day, when I was "on parade," in the Champs Elysées, in Paris, where I arrived without any appalling accident befalling me, that I fell violently in love with one of these pieces of locomotive property. It was not the coachman, or the horse, the interior or exterior of the carriage, that I was specially taken with, but it was the look of the whole thing. I was already tired of rambling

about the Continent, killing time, and touring in search of quiet life; the best years of my life were flowing away. I had been so long removed from the paths of fashion, that, like a neglected watch, it was difficult to "set me going again." I came back to find several men that I had once known well, already married and done for; and thoroughly wearied of existing, whilst everybody else seemed living, I determined to make an effort, and was soon out in society, accepting all the requests of the honour of my company at balls and parties which were worth going to.

In a pretty little boudoir adjoining the brilliantly illuminated ball-room, at the private hotel of La Comtesse de Machault, towards two o'clock in the morning, might have been seen two individuals withdrawn from the gay scene of the *bal costumé* which was going on hard by. The one was a gentleman dressed as *Edgardo* in "Lucia di Lammermoor," and the other was a lady of great personal attraction, who, that evening, could hardly help being a loadstone to the most insipid of her adorers,

inasmuch as she was "hearts" from head to foot, being "got up" to personify the well-known card-board representation of "*la dame de cœurs*." They were both English.

Miss Emily Rivers, which was the name of the lady, was an exceedingly wealthy heiress, and only daughter of a Mr. and Mrs. Rivers, who were extremely rich, and possessed a fine place in the North of England. Mr. Rivers had been one of my father's oldest friends. They had been at school together, at college together, and in the army together; and when they married, each had in his turn lent the other his country seat for the honeymoon; while Mrs. Rivers was an offshoot of one of the best families in England, and bore the impress of aristocracy upon her countenance. Mr. Rivers was at the moment fast asleep at home in the Avenue Matignan, while Mrs. Rivers was supposed to be doing duty on "the green" at the ball above mentioned.

Edgardo was a fortune-hunter, who kept a private alphabetical list of all the heiresses "out," and

"coming out," in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, with the various number of "thousands" and other "advantages" attached to their names, together with their peculiarities. It was so methodically arranged, that perhaps the reader will kindly allow me to copy out some portion for inspection:—

HEIRESS LIST.

Title.	Name.	Age	Country.	Money down.	Expectations.	Tastes, habits, peculiarities.
Miss	Aldcroft	20	England	50,000	Nil.	Fond of racing; weighs 14 stone.
Lady Edith	Hermanstown.	17	Scotland	100,000	Family jewels from an aunt.	Fond of hunting, and herself.
Miss	De Clare	26	England	25,000	That she will be liked for herself.	Amiable, but drinks port wine.
Miss	Rivers	20	Scotland	60,000	A deer-forest and moor.	A lovely girl, not over clever.
Miss	Woodford	22	England	30,000	That she will make a little money by industry.	Taste for farming, and extremely pretty.
Miss	O'Murphy	30	Ireland	Supposed to have a large sum of money invested in a speculation to drain the bogs of Ballinfogle, in the North of Ireland.		Stout, and limps.
Miss	Feversham	44	England	20,000 in her own right, 10,000 on the death of her mother.		Very fond of dogs.

I only extract a few from the list just to show the principle on which it is arranged. There were more than two hundred names in all. Possibly, as the compiler has been at some expense in getting at wills and marriage settlements, and has spared no pains to procure correct information, he may intend publishing a guide to speculative marrying men, as soon as he has made a selection for himself.

The Honourable Augustus Macduff, which was his real name, was one of those men who live nobody knows how, are always well dressed, never in debt, go everywhere, and have a recognised place in society. He was now thirty-two years old, and had been on the "look out" ever since he was of age. Once on the scent of an heiress, he stuck to it like a blood-hound, invariably getting a great advantage over the competitors; when a monied *débutante* was started, he never left her till he had driven her into a corner. The result had always hitherto been the same—the hunted heiress had turned round at bay in self-defence, and compelled him to beat a retreat.

He had had an eye on Emily Rivers for a long time. The agent that he had employed in her country had kept him *au fait* as to all her movements. The last season had been the first she had spent in London; but of course Macduff had taken care to be introduced to her the first time she appeared in public—and in fact, "pressed her" so close, that she was like a bagged fox turned out in a country thoroughly unknown to her, and it was only a wonder she was not worried to death by his persecutions. However, she soon got acclimatised to this new scene, and contrived to keep the "mighty hunter" at a distance.

"I wish you, Emily," Mr. Rivers would say frequently, after hearing of her ball-room doings, "to choose entirely for yourself, unbiassed by any worldly considerations. With the prospect of your fortune before them, there will, no doubt, be plenty of men trying to gain your hand, and working their way into your good graces; but don't be deceived by empty words, and fair-sounding speeches. Choose for yourself, I say, like a clever girl that you are."

Emily Rivers had no intention of being deceived by flattery, however ingenious, or taken in by fallacious attentions. She could not help knowing that she was good-looking. And those who insinuated their admiration of her either by words or looks, told her far less than the first mirror that she approached. Strange to relate, she survived the season in single blessedness, not for want of courtiers, for their name was legion—but because she saw none that she liked sufficiently, to whom to make the gratuitous offering of herself.

Macduff, it is true, who had been the first to do homage to her, was the last to tender to her the resignation of his claim upon her consideration. As if it were by accident, he took care to be in the way on the morning of her departure, and returned to the world gratified to think that anyhow he had been the last to shake the fair heiress's hand, before she journeyed north.

The winter came. Intelligence of the Rivers' plan of passing some months in Paris reached him, while they were still on the journey; and ere they

had been many hours arrived, he was himself in Paris, prepared to open a fresh campaign. He had been almost indifferent to Emily all through the London season; and yet on the evening I am recalling, though she had met him but a few times at balls and parties since his arrival, and occasionally, when she was exercising in the Champs Elysées, he had taken the opportunity to salute her by the recognised fashion of raising the cover off his head, she allowed herself to be ominously inveigled into one of those *tête-à-têtes* which are seldom held for the purpose of discussing politics or other general subjects.

I pass over all the diplomacy peculiar to such occasions—suffice it to say, that the result was satisfactory to the vanity and wishes of the gentleman, and conclusive as to the determination of the lady. When the interview ended, and they left the boudoir, the gentleman looked as if he had been passing "the happiest half-hour of his life," while the lady seemed calm and resigned, but nothing more. They returned to the ball-room, Emily to

fulfil two or three terpsichorean engagements—one with a Russian Prince, extremely sought after, who had "rings on his fingers, and belles at his feet," and was so rich that he was said to scent his handkerchief with "parfum de l'argent"—while Macduff, with a view of making publicity help to pull him through the financial part of the business, which his own inability to make settlements was unlikely to do, took care to insinuate, in the broadest possible way, to the first young lady he danced with, that "he was going to give up going out, and put himself on the retiring list;" which assertion, of course, led the young lady to ask the reason why; this question gave him an opening to help her to make a good guess, which guess she lost no time in imparting to everybody that she knew in the room.

But alas! misfortunes will arise in the best regulated engagements. Something unforseen occurs, annihilating proposal, plans, and prospects in a second; hopes, apparently founded on a rock, are suddenly destroyed by a breath of wind, and

the cup of expectation is transformed into a tankard of disappointment. The gentleman, totally unprepared, finds himself thrown from the high horse on which imagination has mounted him; but he probably gets up uninjured, and resolves to be more wary for the future.

The moment arrived when Mrs. and Miss Rivers were about to take their departure. Macduff took the latter down-stairs, when—oh, extraordinary of all occurrences!—all was upset through the instrumentality of a flower.

"How are you, Miss Rivers?" said the voice of a very late comer, disguised as an Italian bandit, which she immediately recognised as mine.

"How do you do, Mr. Carlton?" she replied; "how very late you are!"

"I went to see the new opera, which was an extremely long one," I explained, "and of course had to go and dress afterwards."

"What a splendid carnation!" she observed as her eye caught sight of one I was wearing. She looked so charming, as the fasci-

nating sovereign, that I instantaneously detached the flower from my button-hole, and presented it to her. She accepted it at once, with the prettiest of smiles.

"'Fly not yet, 'tis just the hour,'" said I, in an imploring strain; but, unfortunately, at that moment the voice of the French link-boy, exclaiming in a loud key, "*Les gens de Madame Rivers*," was heard from without; and as "*les gens*" immediately answered their call, the only course left for me was to offer Miss Rivers my arm, and escort her to the carriage.

We did not shake hands, but only pressed them.

"I suppose we shall meet to-morrow," said she, as she held up the carnation triumphantly in her hand; and in a moment was "gone from my gaze."

Mrs. Rivers, who, during our short conversation, was cloaking and preparing to start, saw nothing of all this; but, as I entered the ball-room, *Edgardo* darted upon me as ferocious a look of

jealous rage as ever that character cast upon his rival in the famous opera.

"Emily is going to be married," said Mrs. Rivers to her husband the next morning, having reserved that piece of intelligence, as a *bonne bouche,* for him to take in at breakfast.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the gentleman, swallowing a large mouthful, in order to make room for this one.

"It is possible and true," continued Mrs. Rivers. "And it is to Mr. Macduff, a gentleman I always liked. He is connected with the Macduffs of Fifeshire, and seems to know everybody."

"Really!" replied Mr. Rivers; "and do you think he is a good sort of fellow, and not one of your mercenary fortune-seekers, who have been running after her money, and would value her for her weight of gold?"

"Well, she knew him all through the London season," said his wife. "She only informed me last night that he had proposed to her, and that she had accepted him; but, judging from what

I saw this morning, I should be inclined to think that she likes him."

"What did you see this morning?" he asked.

"Why, I went to take a peep at Emily just now," she replied—"you know she is always late after a ball—and I found her fast asleep, with one arm outside the coverlet, in the hand of which she held a carnation, which he doubtless gave her. So, at all events, there is some sort of sentiment about it."

"Poor little thing!" said Mr. Rivers, with rather a thoughtful look.

"I'm afraid that my education was neglected, as far as concerns the language of flowers, otherwise we might know what it meant."

That this topic afforded conversation during the remainder of breakfast, and some time after, will create no wonder. But as Emily was to do as she liked, no difficulty or impediment was raised.

Perhaps the reader may think that there was a degree of *veni, vidi, vici*, braggadocio, about my

description of the short scene which took place between Miss Rivers and myself in the vestibule of the splendid apartments of the Comtesse de Machaul. But it only requires explanation. In the wildest days of my boyhood the Rivers family used to be continually staying at my father's house. Little Emmy, as I used to call her then, was a particular pet of mine. When I was ten years old, and she was seven, we were a great deal together. She was not a very pretty girl, but, then, she was a great romp, and, consequently, I liked her. She delighted in a piece of mischief as much as I did, which is perhaps saying a good deal; and there was not a servant in the house, or attached to the stables and gardens, who was not, at one time or another, the victim of our persecution.

We used to cut holes in gentlemen's umbrellas when they came to call, and perforate their hats; and if there was a dinner party, and a heap of great-coats left in the hall, we would change the contents—putting a large cigar-case, abstracted from some young officer's pocket, into that of an

elderly clergyman, and a pair of old spectacles from the latter's into the former's, and such like freaks.

Then we used to ride about together on ponies; and in those days Emmy always declared that, when she became "a lady," she should marry Georgie, as she called me, and that she had quite made up her mind to propose to me if I did not to her.

For many years, the reader will not be astonished to hear, we had not met till I came to Paris.

By-the-bye, I quite omitted to mention the series of maternal kisses which were administered to me by my mother, on my arrival, and how my father squeezed my hand in such a way, and for so long a time, that I was afraid some of my fingers were being put out of joint under the operation.

When I say I came to Paris, and met her a full-grown, fine, handsome girl, at my father's apartments, where the family constantly dined, it will be easily seen that there was nothing wonderful in our becoming great friends again.

At first I began calling her Emily, from old reminiscences; but I saw Mrs. Rivers, when she heard me, turn so painful an aristocratic look upon me, that I thought it prudent to adopt the formal "Miss," so much objected to by Rosie Acton.

We used to talk over youthful days. "Don't you remember this," and "Don't you remember that," furnished us with a fund of conversation; and then I met her out a great deal in society; she too was kind enough to get invitations for me wherever she was going herself, and invite me to their box at the opera.

I had no intention of falling in love with her, or making up to her for her fortune, because I always had a holy horror of marrying for money. That she liked me I could not help seeing—I should have been extremely blind if I had not. The image of Clara Hindley, however, always came back to me, appearing, at such moments, like a guardian phantom to fetter my affections, and hinder me from committing myself.

Emily was extremely ladylike and quiet, always looked well, and even without a fortune would have been regarded as a beauty. Why was it that a hopeless attachment had poisoned my mind, as it were, against the whole of womankind, and rendered me callous to undeniable attractions?

Clara's vision would manifest itself before my eyes as the standard that defied comparison, and make me discontented with every fresh candidate for admiration.

Some days before the ball at the Comtesse de Machaul's, I had absolutely felt that I ought, by some means or another, without hurting her feelings, to shew Emily that I had no intentions at all regarding her. I endeavoured to become gradually more distant in my manner towards her; but circumstances did not favour me.

One night, at the Hôtel de Ville ball, which, as the reader knows, is larger than a Lord Mayor's ball in London, I danced with her, only one quadrille during the evening, and, after our dance was over, we were two hours in finding Mrs. Rivers.

I could not leave Emily among strangers, and whilst she was with me I could not do otherwise than talk to her. She seemed resolutely to have shut her eyes to the possibility of my wishing to keep aloof from her, and, as a matter of course, stopped and talked wherever we met, and even rallied me on my apparent shortsightedness, if I attempted to pass unobserved.

And yet she was not the least forward; far from it. She remembered how she had known me as a child, and it seemed unnatural to her to be otherwise than most intimate with me. All this time I had most scrupulously avoided paying her any sort of compliment, or giving her to understand that I regarded her otherwise than as a friend.

The afternoon before the Comtesse de Machaul's ball was one of brilliant sunshine. The Champs Elysées was crowded. I had not been long there before I perceived Emily walking up and down. I immediately went and devoted myself to a young lady of whom I knew that she was a little jealous, and, as the

latter passed and repassed me, I most steadfastly refused to allow my eyes to catch hers. The next time we met was towards the finale of the ball, when I took the important step of giving her my carnation.

The scene is once more in the Avenue Matignan.

When "sweet sleep" had left Emily's eyelids, and she woke up from her last morning dream, at which time, it is said, such visions always come true, she was encouraged by finding that she still held the subject of it in her hand. Her dream had been concerning that pretty specimen of the clove carnation, which had been furnished me a few hours before the ball by a florist in the Place de la Madelaine, for the sum of tenpence. As she held it in her hand, it still seemed as fresh as when she retired with it to rest; it had not changed its colour—it was still a compact flower, without a languid leaf about it. In the contemplation of it (I make the assertion with the requisite amount of vanity), *Edgardo* was completely forgotten.

The carnation had entirely supplanted him, and his dynasty was at an end.

Yet why in that secluded boudoir had she accepted his offer only a few hours before? There was no doubt that he meant marriage, while the carnation meant nothing. She had acquiesced in his proposal at a moment when she felt reckless as to the future. She was now resolved to withdraw her promise, and trust to a fading flower. She had never cared for *Edgardo*. There was too much transparency about the compliments he paid her, and too laboured a style about the expression of his feelings, to please her. Certainly he could dance very well, and if likely to be as good a partner through life as he was in the ball-room, any young lady would have been safe in his hands. Guiding a fair form through the mazes of a crowded valse was, however, a different thing to steering it through the vicissitudes of a life-time. The clumsiest dancer would perhaps do the latter business just as well as the most accomplished ball-room pilot.

Not that Emily looked at things in such a calculating way. She was not like one of your heiresses of a certain age, whom experience has made wary, and who has acquired wisdom approaching that of Solomon. Yes, and who would look through a suitor with a Solomon's glass, if she could find one strong enough to assist her. Emily had seen little of "life," and only judged aspirants to her hand by impressions and fancies.

On waking, she could only remember parts of her dream. Where the plot was laid, even, she could not recall to memory. She had a distinct recollection that the subject of it was an Italian bandit, who had not plundered her like a vulgar highwayman, but had stolen from her the key of her heart, which was already promised to another. She remembered that she had made no resistance to the robbery, but felt interested in the robber; and when he asked her to become his bandit wife, she had consented, without swearing first that she would not consent. He had taken the flower out

of his hat and presented it to her, as a token of his affection, and an exchange for the key. And when she woke, there was the flower in her hand, the last link of the dream, and the first object that met her eye.

Did the transfer of that flower from my button-hole to her hand mean that I had proposed to her? The dream said Yes, and she was willing to believe it; besides, it was a morning dream? "He has never given me anything before, never till last night expressed a wish that I should stay where he was."

"Fly not yet, 'tis just the hour." Those, she remembered, were my words, and she remembered, too, the way in which they were said! Then how I had pressed her hand, and had gone so far as to suppose we should meet to-morrow. Why should I suppose we should meet to-morrow? I had never before supposed anything of the kind. Yes, I must really mean something. The very fact of my appearing at all before she was irretrievably another's, was ominous.

Then, she believed in morning dreams. The evidence was all one way. She decided that it was conclusive; and if any doubt existed in her own mind, why, she gave me the benefit of it. But what was to be done with that horrid *Edgardo*? Certainly something, and that soon.

Before she rung the bell for her maid, she determined all in her own mind. She would tell papa that she had only listened to *Edgardo* in a moment of reckless despair, and would make him go and put that hero off in the neatest way that could be managed; and then she would say that she had always liked Mr. Carlton, and that she had accepted him because she could give him her heart as well as her hand.

When she appeared in the salon, not wearing her carnation, the stem of which was now luxuriating in a tumbler in her room, with its head above water, Mr. Rivers greeted her thus:

"Well, Emily, dear, I congratulate you with all my heart!"

To which Emily half unconsciously replied:

"Which do you mean, papa?"

The good gentleman certainly did not comprehend his daughter's interrogatory answer, and he would have been quite at a loss how to proceed, had she not immediately "taken up the running," and told him all.

Mr. Rivers was a most good-natured man, and excessively fond of his daughter, consequently he was prepared to undertake any business of which the object was to please her. How *Edgardo's* put off was arranged and worked we are unable to state. No doubt it was done in the most delicate and civil way possible under the circumstances, but it is no use attempting to explain what we really are ignorant of. In fact, there are so many things I have related which people may wonder how I came to know, that I take the opportunity of reminding the reader that every author is allowed a certain license of narration, of which it is unfair to call upon him to give an account.

"Well, George, and how did the fancy-ball go

off?" inquired my father, when I made my appearance the next day.

"Oh! great fun!" I replied, "and the most beautiful costumes you can imagine. There was one lady especially, 'night,' with radiating diamond stars of great brilliancy twinkling all over her, and as she was very pretty, there was a host of admiring 'astrologers' engaged in contemplating her. There were the various periods of the year personified, conspicuous among which was 'sweet smiling spring,' in the form of a pretty girl, wearing a dress which was a device of pictures, consisting of a forest of freshly foliated trees, a grassy meadow, tenanted by skipping lambs, and a garden gaily laid out in beds of double violets and hepaticas, whilst her head was adorned with a wreath of seasonable wild-flowers, matted together in sweet confusion, in the midst of which little birds on diminutive nests were comfortably ensconced. I must say I thought her representation of spring beat nature's all to fits, and could not help agreeing with an observation I heard made about

her by a Frenchman, who remarked how much more exciting it would be disentangling innocent flowers with a trembling hand from the tresses of her hair, than picking cowslips in a swampy meadow, up to one's ankles in mud."

"Ah! just like a Frenchman," observed my father, with a laugh.

"Then there was," I continued, "an appropriately coloured edition of 'little red ridinghood,' which, being Gallicised, is called *le petit chaperon rouge*—in fact, all sorts of quaint and pretty costumes; but by far the loveliest toilette of the evening, to my mind, was that of Emily Rivers, as 'The Queen of Hearts.' I never saw her look so well before. She was positively charming!"

Just as I had finished the latter remark, my father seemed almost as if he was starting from his chair. He appeared to have had a sudden twinge. At first I thought it was a passing touch of gout, but on looking at him, I saw his countenance was far too jolly to admit of the idea. He was evidently under the influence of a sudden attack of happi-

ness, which I could not help thinking was somehow or another connected with what I had just said. But why he should care whether I admired this young lady or not, I certainly could not see.

"Oh! Emily Rivers was well got up, was she?" he asked.

"Yes, she looked awfully well," I replied; and I was about to take up "Galignani," for something to do, when the servant entered, with a note for me. I opened it and read it. It was from Mrs. Rivers, and ran as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Carlton,—We trust that you will look upon our 'apartments' as a second home, and that you will give up all ceremony, and come in whenever you feel inclined.

"Ever yours very sincerely,

"Amelia Rivers."

"Good Heavens! what can be the meaning of this thoroughly *carte blanche* invitation?" were the first words that I uttered to myself, after

perusing my letter. Mrs. Rivers seemed perfectly in possession of all her faculties a few hours ago. What could have prompted her to give this wholesale order for my society? She was generally so frigid that the shortest conversation with her was no fun in cold weather. Had the iciness of her manner suddenly thawed?—or had her pen run away with her? Anyhow, it was so incomprehensible to me, that I determined to take the first opportunity of solving the mystery, by going to luncheon with them that very day.

I found Mrs. Rivers alone in the salon. She received me with a manner evidently "warmed up" for the occasion, and invited me to dinner. I was not engaged, so, of course, accepted.

Presently Emily Rivers entered, looking rather flushed, but very pretty, and my eye immediately fell upon my carnation, which was enjoying the pride of place on a very exalted part of her dress.

We went to luncheon. I talked away as usual; why shouldn't I? Mrs. Rivers listened, and occa-

sionally remarked, while Emily's eyes were very frequently upon me. When the repast was concluded, and we adjourned to the salon, I perceived that the mother had vanished. She was nowhere to be seen, and I was left alone with the daughter. This was an unusual occurrence, I may say very much so; in fact it struck me so much at the time, that for the first few moments I didn't know what to say.

"How wonderfully you have preserved that flower, Miss Rivers!" at length I observed.

"Oh, yes! isn't it beautiful still?" said she, looking down at it. "You can't think how I prize it! I shall always keep it in memory of"—here she hesitated some seconds—"the—ball."

"Are you making a collection of dried blossoms?" I asked carelessly; but I saw she looked so astounded at the question, that, lest our conversation should come to an untimely end, I told her how flattered I was that she had deigned to keep it so long. She brightened up instantly.

"How *could* you ask me such a question?" she

said, with a smile that bore a most striking family likeness to the one she bestowed on me when I gave her the flower. In fact, it was a regular queen-of-hearts smile, and told accordingly. I could have given her another carnation under its influence, but, unfortunately, I hadn't one. I, however, congratulated her on the successfulness of her costume the night before, which did as well.

She attached immense meaning to my words, and felt glad that she had given me the benefit of the doubt alluded to above; but she had not been so much in French society as I had. There a man may compliment a lady on her dress, or anything else, and forget, the next moment, that he had done so; and if one once catches the habit, it is so difficult to break oneself of it.

Our conversation, which was a curious one, lasted some time. I could not quite make her out. Whenever I talked on general subjects she did not looked pleased, but when I talked about her, and her doings, she seemed so very much more

satisfied. I daresay it was extremely stupid of me, and perhaps the puzzle was not a difficult one, but I could not put the pieces together. I felt that since the last few hours I quite liked her, although, up to the vestibule scene, I had felt nothing more for her than that I was glad to meet again one whom I had known well as a child, and who seemed to have so much pleasure in talking over old days. This was but the feeling of friendship.

Now I certainly did feel for her a degree of liking stronger than mere friendship, but not strong enough to call love. There were moments *now* when I could say things to her that I should never have dreamt of yesterday. There was a difference that had crept imperceptibly over my manner, both of speaking to and looking at her—but it was not love. No, that tyrannical image of Clara Hindley held a dog-in-the-manger sway over my heart; though, between her and me, there was that great gulf which her own scruples and high-mindedness had fixed.

Yet, on the principle that while there's life there's

hope, I still indulged at times a sort of dreamy idea that the intervening watery space might by some miraculous process be dried up, and that she might yet be mine. Though she had told me "to think no more of her," I had hardly obeyed her injunctions to the letter.

The moment arrived when, owing to an appointment with a friend, my visit was obliged to end. I was half relieved, because I felt that we did not understand each other. But we shook hands very cordially, notwithstanding that we were so soon to meet again. Yet, I must admit, I did not altogether regret that I was going to dine in the Avenue.

When the time came, I had not yet communed with myself as to my feelings regarding her, and indeed I had not had much time; but, in the meanwhile, I went whither my footsteps and inclinations led me.

Mr. Rivers greeted me with the most frank and honest cordiality. I could see, when he shook hands with me, that he had the advantage of knowing more than I did; but he said little. There was

an artificial hot-house warmth about Mrs. Rivers's manner. Emily came down. I asked her if she had enjoyed her drive; in return she inquired how I had spent my time.

Dinner was then announced, and in due time came to its conclusion, but not, however, before my eyes had been thoroughly opened to the true state of affairs. Mr. Rivers's candour and honesty of manner, with difficulty restrained in the presence of the servants; at length during their temporary absence, he could bear the suspense no longer. He insisted on blessing Emily, and congratulating me. It was done in a moment, and there was no stopping him. The servants re-appeared, and a look from Mrs. Rivers called him to order.

After dessert had been some time on the table, that lady suggested that we should all adjourn, which arrangement I was delighted at, having no fancy for a *tête-à-tête* with her husband under the circumstances. We went into the salon.

Presently she withdrew, making, as an excuse, that she had a bad headache. Then Mr.

Rivers sat down in an arm-chair and began to snore, which Emily was not at all inclined to allow that night; whereupon the old gentleman, declaring that he never did snore, said he should retire likewise. Emily and I were left alone.

I was determined to summon up resolution to speak. It must be done.

"Emily," I said, "I am to start to-morrow on a long journey. I am going to travel in the East."

My words fell upon her like a shock, as I feared they might; but delay would only have made matters worse, and it would have been wrong to trifle with her.

"Are you really going away so soon as to-morrow?" she said, without yet realising thoroughly what I had said.

"Yes, Emily," I continued, "I leave early to-morrow morning. I have long wished to go to the East, and I have a friend there whom I can join."

She appeared, I thought, to listen quite placidly

whilst I briefly told her my plans, and it really seemed as if our parting was to take place amicably.

"I have got several things to do previous to my departure," I said, "and even two or three visits to pay this evening, as I only made up my mind at the last moment."

"And it *is* made up?" she said, interrogatively, and in a manner that betrayed a lurking hope that the mind's decision *was* still revocable.

"Yes, I think so," I replied.

Then a pause ensued. She looked quite calm. I took advantage of the moment.

"Emily," I said, approaching her, "I hope we shall meet again before long. Good-bye."

She rose from her chair, and put out her hand towards mine.

"Good-bye, Mr. Carlton," I heard her say, in a low, but rather tremulous voice, with her eyes fixed upon the floor.

I was perfectly collected; a few paces and a turn of the door handle would conclude the scene.

I was momentarily occupied in admiring her beautifully shaped head, as it was still bent down. Suddenly she raised it. For the twentieth part of a second our eyes met, but that period was too long. Instantaneously she covered her face with her hands, and fell upon the sofa, sobbing convulsively.

What man can boast himself so thoroughly of granite, as to be able, in such a case as mine, to contemplate with calmness a pretty woman in tears? Certainly I cannot. Perhaps, at the sight of a plain girl weeping, I should be able to fold my arms and look on as cooly as anyone; but Emily was undeniably a pretty girl. In the presence of her grief the hardness of my heart melted in a moment.

"Dear Emily," I exclaimed, on my knees at her side. "You know that I am very, very fond of you—that it would be absurd of me to attempt to deny it. Yes, Emily, I am extremely fond of you; but I am sure, if you knew all, you would agree with me that it would be wrong of me to say more."

"Perhaps you are already married?" said Emily, unreflectingly, and evidently regretting, when she came to the end of the sentence, that she had said so much.

"Oh, no!" I replied; "pray don't think that; but there are, Emily, dear, reasons to prevent my marrying at present."

The sobbing continued, so I went on:

"In the first place, I don't know if you are aware, Emily, that I have a great many debts?"

Here she interrupted me with:

"Oh! yes, I know that, but I don't see how that could stand in the way of your marrying." Then correcting herself, she added. "Of course I know it's no business of mine, but I cannot see——"

As the sobbing was renewed, I proceeded in the following words, speaking in the most forcible tone that I could command:

"Emily, will you listen to what I am going to say?"

She promised that she would.

"Well, then," I continued, "in days gone by it

was my lot to become intimate with one whose memory is still dear to me—one who for a long time monopolised all the energies of my affection, and for whom I would have laid down my life. But it was a hopeless case, and I have long since habituated my mind to regard it as such. Yet the sorrow that I felt on the occasion, though it gradually lost its intensity, has left an unhappy blight in my heart, which no diversion has yet completely dispelled. I have entirely lost sight of her who was the cause of my suffering, and shall probably never see her again. Are you prepared to accept such fragments of a shattered heart that now remain at my disposal?"

She paused in silent thought for some seconds. Then in an earnest and melancholy voice she replied:

"Is it totally out of my power to restore it to its former self?"

"Emily," I answered, "be candid. You love me!"

Her silence confirmed me.

"You now know all, Emily," I proceeded. "Take me if you will—nay, I ask it, cheer me with your sunny smiles—forgive me beforehand if I am sometimes low-spirited, and I will undertake to make you as happy as it is possible for me to make you; in short, I will love, honour, and cherish you for a lifetime."

I took her hand in mine.

"Dear Emily!" I continued, "will you consent?"

"If you will promise always to love me just a little wee bit!"

"Oh! yes, I will—I must, for I *do* love you," was my reply.

One unmistakeable look from her powerful eye, simultaneously with an extra touching smile, confirmed all she said.

"You'll try never to repent what you now solemnly undertake?" I asked.

"If you will try, too," was her short but conditional answer.

I clasped her in my arms. I made no reply,

and she forgot to require one. I was an engaged man! All the result of that fatal smile in the Comtesse de Machaul's ante-room. I don't know how Emily ever acquired the power of employing it—whether it were part of the costume furnished by her dressmaker, or whether she copied it from a fancy pack of French cards, I never found out, but I certainly never remarked such a smile on her countenance before. Perhaps I had not looked for it.

When I shook hands with her that night, and imprinted "Love's first pledge—the virgin kiss," we had come to a great many definite arrangements. There was no difficulty to smooth over. She was a free agent as to the disposal of herself.

"Papa," she said, "likes you, and mamma has no objection to you."

I thought of the brougham, and looked forward to that part of the business with great pleasure. How she laughed when I insisted on all the constitutional parts of the vehicle being perfect, and

her own toilette in particular. She said I was as bad as a baby looking forward to a new toy.

I expressed myself, too, very much opposed to long engagements. I thought of the proverb about procrastination; Emily was willing that I should have my own way in everything.

The next morning I informed my father. I really thought the old gentleman would have gone out of his mind with joy. He jumped up and clapped his hands, and looked as excited as a man proposing "the Ladies" at a college supper.

"It has always been the darling wish of my heart," he said, "that you should marry Rivers's daughter. She is a little trump, and I will pay your debts, my boy—every farthing, at once."

If he had not upset a large Sèvres vase, in his ecstasy, and broke it to atoms (it was my mother's property, and she took care to observe on his clumsiness on the spot), I really believe he would have taken saltatory exercise all round the apartment.

It is extremely satisfactory to do something

which one sees gives pleasure to a lot of people. One participates in their joy, from a knowledge of being the cause of it—provided of course there is but a moderate supply of amiability in one's character. Emily was in the most charming good spirits, Mr. and Mrs. Rivers delighted, my father and mother in ecstasies. Whole groups of men, who were in the best society, used to turn round and look at me as the lucky fellow of the day, when I appeared in public. Unsuccessful lady-snarers, who muster in strong force during the Paris season, regarded me as the pet child of Fortune, and envied me accordingly.

I had shaken off all other competitors for this great prize, without the semblance of a struggle, and was about to receive without a dispute; yet the reader will hardly believe it, there were still reactionary moments when I wished myself out of it, and I was troubled with vague presentiments that, once my independence gone, something or other would happen, which would cause me to regret the step I had taken. Sometimes I lamented

that I had not exhibited a sufficient amount of precaution previous to the final matrimonial plunge; a vision would stand before me in my dreams, chiding me with inconstancy to the memory of my early love. I would beg for one short interview with that unmistakeable figure, but a sepulchral voice would repeat to me, "Too late! too late! too late!" Then the vision would cast upon me a look of displeasure; as I attempted to seize it by the hand, it vanished from my presence, and the dream was over.

I was about to be married to a lovely girl, coveted by everybody, one so renowned for her beauty, that Parisian society had christened her "la belle blonde d'Angleterre." I was about to wed the fair proprietress of blue eyes, bright complexion, and beautiful features, carried by a graceful form, and supported by a faultless pair of little feet. I was about to lead to the altar a young lady gifted with an agreeable manner, a large fortune, and a loving heart; and yet, dissatisfied wretch that I was, I did not value that treasure as I should have done.

I did not wish to back out. I had gone so far, that I could not do so with honour; but I was undeserving of the prize. However, when I was with her, hesitation and regrets disappeared. I used to joke with her on the way she had proposed to me, more than I had to her; and I was amused with the simplicity of her remarks—for I must state the fact, that she was not what people would have called an exceedingly clever girl, neither was there a vast amount of latent love in her.

She used to walk out with me in the Bois de Boulogne, chaperoned by a large dog, that never left her side. She was always very nicely dressed, and certainly people used to look at her in a sort of way that made me proud of her.

The financial preliminaries were progressing most satisfactorily. We were to start in life on three thousand pounds a year. My debts were all settled, and wedding presents came in shoals. It became necessary to select a suitable place in which to pass that period devoted by the newly married to the uninterrupted worship of Hymen.

I remember how that question brought back to my mind the memory of Clara Hindley in a most melancholy way. I recollected in the days when that adorable creature occupied my every thought, I had formed a project of passing that month of Elysian bliss in the beautiful elevated village of Bonchurch, at the back of the Isle of Wight, where, remote from the busy scenes of everyday life, my imagination revelled in the dream of being isolated from the world, in the society of that terrestrial angel. There, amid magnificent fuschias, enjoying the delightful combination of blossom and shade, with the bright blue sea perceptible below, I loved to fancy myself roaming in retirement, with Clara on my arm. Alas! 'twas but a deceptive phantom of ideal happiness, which destiny had refused to realise.

This was hardly the sort of retrospect I ought to have allowed myself to indulge in on the eve of matrimony. However, I made an effort to force myself away from the contemplation of the past,

and turned round to the bright-seeming prospect which stretched out before me.

We agreed to go and pass our honeymoon at Tunbridge Wells, one of the most picturesque localities in the south of England, and easy of access from Paris.

The eventful morning, at length, arrived. We were married at the Embassy Chapel. The wedding passed off as weddings generally do. The usual allowance of tears were exhibited. People embraced each other, as usual, "at the kissing time" after service. Emily inscribed her name in the book of registry, quite correctly, below mine. The affair went off precisely as it should do, and in due time we arrived at Tunbridge Wells, prepared to be fleeced in the customary way, and

> "To live and love together,
> Through many changing years."

CHAPTER V.

"Help me my own love's praises to resound,
Nor let the same of any be envied;
So Orpheus did for his own bride."

SPENSER.

THE generality of authors, when they come to a honeymoon, treat their readers much in the same sort of way as the proprietor of a show residence treats strangers, on days reserved to himself; excepting that, instead of placarding up, in large letters,

"THE PUBLIC ARE NOT ADMITTED,"

the writer becomes metaphorical, and "draws a veil over the scene." But one announcement is as conclusive as the other. In the former case the

public are destined to see nothing, in the latter to hear nothing.

Perhaps I may be permitted to deviate so far from the general rule, as to state that we put up at the Sussex Hotel, at Tunbridge Wells; that I thought the weekly bills uncommonly high, and the dinners very bad, compared with the French cookery. I trust, reader, I have not yet gone beyond bounds, because I am going to say a little more. I am going to say, if you will only promise to read on, that, before the first month of our marriage had elapsed, I could not help discovering, in spite of her beauty, which always renders one blind to a multitude of sins, that Emily was rather an eccentric young lady in some respects.

To a most extraordinary degree she was troubled with absent fits. What was the cause of them I could not make out. Doubtless they had grown upon her, and from having long been unobserved or disregarded, they had become habitual. She had now, it seemed, lost all power or energy to combat with them.

I remember the first time that I observed anything of the kind, was very soon after our marriage. I asked her to take a stroll in the gardens, and she retired into her dressing-room, for the purpose of putting on her bonnet.

"I shan't be a second," she exclaimed as she left the sitting-room.

However, a great many hundred seconds passed away, and she did not return. At length, tired of waiting, I knocked at her door. There was no answer. I then opened the door and looked in, without really believing it was in the least probable that she was there, when I beheld her, standing before the cheval-glass, tying and untying her bonnet, and then stopping to gaze listlessly at her own apparently inanimate features in the glass.

For some moments I could not help standing still, and looking at her, wondering what it could mean.

"Emily, dear," at length I said, "are you never coming?"

She turned round, seeming perfectly uncon-

scious of what she was doing; and after staring at me a moment, said,

"I shan't be an instant, dear George; I have only got my bonnet to tie."

"Why, you have been this half hour tying it, dear," I replied.

"Oh! how can you say so?" she exclaimed; "I have only just left you!"

My own impatience and my watch told me otherwise. However, I took no further notice at the time, and we went for our walk. But these temporary retirements into the clouds were too frequent to escape my attention.

To say that I got accustomed to her extraordinary sayings and doings, would be hardly the truth; for although there was a pleasing diversity about each fresh instance of her eccentricity, yet I did not find in this case that even "variety was charming." That little quarrels were the result will not, perhaps, be astonishing; but then what honeymoon is so sweet as to be entirely free from them?

I one day left in her room my watch and chain, to which I wore appended an average sized gold locket; and as the interior of such articles is frequently more an object of curiosity than the exterior, there was nothing extraordinary in the fact that her fingers found their way to the clasp, and, eventually, her eyes to the contents. The locket contained nothing but a piece of folded paper, on which there was a memorandum. She unfolded and read it. It was as follows:—

"C. H., 15 Piccadilly."

She knew that Clara Hindley was the name of my early innamorata.

"Alas!" she said to herself, "am I so soon to be forgotten? Was I married but to become the dupe of a designing husband, and am I destined thus early to discover the instability of his affection? Oh! mamma! mamma! is it for this that I gave up my independence, and your protection?"

At that moment she heard me coming, and immediately returned the document to the place from whence it came.

"I forgot my watch, my dear," I said.

"Oh! there it is," she replied, in a tone that I might have noticed as remarkable, only at the moment I felt inexpressibly gratified on finding that my property had not been sent to the wash, or thrown away as rubbish.

On looking at her, I could not help saying:

"Why, Emily, dear, you seem as if you had been crying."

"Oh! dear no, you are quite mistaken," she replied, with an evidently assumed air of flippant coldness. "My eyes have got rather weak, in consequence of reading too much."

Two or three days went by; I fancied several times that her manner was rather different to what it had been, and there seemed a sort of lurking suspicion about her way of receiving everything I told her, as well as of her believing my assertions as to where I was going when I went out, or if I wrote a letter and she was ignorant to whom it was addressed; but then I thought it was only a new phase of absence, making

the heart grow colder for a time, which would speedily give place to another phase; so I took little notice of it.

In the course of a few days I proposed to her running up to London for a change, where I said I had business to attend to.

"Oh! yes, I daresay you have—of course, naturally. I can quite understand I suppose very pressing, and of a delicate nature?" she exclaimed, with a satirical look, and toss of the head.

"Well, no, nothing very urgent," I replied. "I don't suppose I shall find any insurmountable difficulty in accomplishing what I intend."

"I have no doubt you will have no insuperable difficulty to encounter," she continued, with the same air. "You will go up *Piccadilly*, I suppose, in the course of your business?"

"Most prodably I shall," I answered. "Can I do anything there for you?"

Suddenly, to my astonishment, she burst into a passionate fit of weeping. The hands covered her face in the same way as they had done once before

so successfully. The result was this time much the same as last. I was instantly at her side.

"Dear Emily! darling Emily!" I exclaimed, "what is the matter? Are you ill? Do tell me what distresses you!"

I put my arm round her waist.

"Oh! leave me alone!" she cried, "you don't care for me. I'm the most miserable of women! Oh! what shall I do?" and she sobbed so loud that I feared the next door neighbour would be rushing in, under the impression that I was beating my wife.

"Come, Emily, dearest, tell us what's the matter, like a good little woman!" said I, smoothing her hair with my hand.

"Oh, you *are* such a monster!—you *have* deceived me so!" she answered; "I know you are going to see her—Clara Hindley!"

"What *do* you mean, Emily? Who *has* put this into your head?" I continued.

A whole volley of sobs were then fired at me, succeeded by,

"I know—you have her address in your locket. I saw it, and you owned you were going to Piccadilly!"

"My dear child," said I this time, unable to refrain from laughing, "how could you be such a stupid little thing? Shall I explain the mystery of my poor locket?"

She requested that I would, and I did so as follows;

"Before I left Paris, my dear, I observed to a friend of mine that I intended to buy some horses as soon as ever I was settled. He recommended to my notice those of an acquaintance of his in London. I took a note of the address on a scrap of paper, and fastened it in my locket. C. H., instead of 'Clara Hindley,' meant 'Chestnut Horses,' which were to be heard of at '15, Piccadilly;' and if you, my dear," I continued, "like to come with me, you shall see the proprietor of the animals yourself."

The tears were suddenly dried up; and a radiant smile beamed across her countenance. She rushed

into my arms, begged me to forgive her ill-founded suspicion, and, in the joy of the moment, made as much fuss of me as if I had been a Hungarian refugee of the highest rank, who had just made a most moving statement of Austrian persecution. The amount of jealousy that she had entertained of the chestnut horse was certainly worthy of a better cause.

To say that I was glad when our honeymoon came to an end, would, unquestionably, have been true, though certainly unamiable. I discovered that I had—to use a harmless term—rather a curious young lady to accompany me through life. For, between you and me, reader, those absent fits used to bore me excessively; and when I saw her in that state, I must own that I did not sympathise with her quite so much as I ought to have done. I could not help feeling that they were an annoyance; and I dreaded lest my temper —not half a bad one—might some day or other break down when too severely taxed.

However, it was no use harbouring useless

regrets; and, looking back with a sigh upon the charms of past independence—questionable as they may have been regarded—when I could travel about, free from care and trouble, "*avec tous mes bien envelopés dans un mouchoir*," as a Frenchman once said to me: whereas now, whenever I moved, I was to find myself on the platform, forming part and parcel of a mountain-sized heap of luggage, embracing every species of box and baggage that was ever turned out of a trunk-maker's establishment; and had I scrambled to the top, and looked down on the prospect below of peaceful bachelors hurrying here and there, with no thought save for themselves and their portmanteaus, I am scarcely sure that I should not have contemplated the scene with an eye half-tainted with envy.

Then there was a man-servant and a maid-servant, claiming no end of supervision and directions; with last, but not least, a very nice but perfectly helpless wife, incapable of travelling alone without her railway-ticket tied to her bonnet-strings.

Sometimes—I suppose from the malady of "absence" being somewhat catching—I used to detect myself addressing her as Clara instead of Emily; but luckily she had never been sufficiently herself to notice it, otherwise a slight breeze might have been the result. My manner, apparently contented and happy, never betrayed a symptom of the gloom that was frequently overcoming me; and though (I blush whilst I state it) I had now and then to stifle as it rose a thought that was not quite complimentary to my wife, yet I was determined that, so far as doing my duty correctly was concerned, I would appear before the world as a model husband.

We were already on the eve of our departure for the metropolis. My wife had retired to bed. I was still before our sitting-room fire, moodily living over in thought the days of our sojourn at Tunbridge Wells, musing on the subject of my wife's peculiarities, half fearing she might be perhaps a little "touched" in mind, and wondering whether it was only a temporary affliction,

when I looked at my watch, and found that my usual hour of retiring had long since flown by.

I turned the handle of our dormitory door with a careful hand, for fear of waking my wife, and attempted to push it noiselessly open. But, to my astonishment, I found there was some resistance from within that almost defied my efforts.

At length I managed to effect an entrance, but well nigh staggered backwards, ere I had advanced a foot into the room. My candle was blown out. I managed to regain the door, and proceeded in search of a fresh light. I hastily retraced my steps, fearing something dreadful, but at a loss to imagine what.

This time I succeeded in getting into the room with my candle burning. I called "Emily," with a loud voice, being alarmed at finding she was nowhere to be seen. What preternatural force had, as it were, driven me from the room the first time? What magic power had suddenly extinguished my candle, and almost deprived me of my senses? I

was on the point of quitting the room, nearly stupified by the atmosphere, but still sufficiently myself to feel convinced that something indefinitely awful had occurred, when I stumbled against an unusual impediment, close to the doorway. The light that I carried burned but dimly, and I had to bring it nearly to a level with the ground, in order to discover what it was that I had come in contact with. It was my wife, lying apparently lifeless on the floor.

I instantly raised her, with difficulty extricating, from underneath the doorway one of her hands, almost crushed. I laid her on the bed, managed to bring people to the spot, and sent for a doctor, though, as it was already past midnight, it was some little time before one could be procured.

I was at a loss to imagine what had occurred. Everybody suggested something. One said she had taken laudanum; another declared she was in a trance; a third, that it was a shock of the system; in fact, every sort of absurd cause was assigned. For myself I never did profess to under-

stand the organization of young ladies, so I said nothing.

Presently the doctor arrived. He was a resolute-looking man, and seemed thoroughly to understand his business. I remarked that everything he said was in despatch language—that is to say, he omitted every word that his sentences could do without, giving the impression that he must have passed the greater part of his life with a *precis* writer.

He went through the usual process of discovering whether life was extinct, without saying a word, while I was anxiously watching the working of his countenance, with a view of knowing the true state of her case. At length he spoke:

"Bad case—touch and go—animation still—open windows—air indispensable."

Having delivered himself of this oration, he took up his patient, and carried her to the window, which I quickly opened.

There was a fresh breeze blowing, and, in a few minutes, I had the infinite satisfaction of behold-

ing my wife show signs of returning consciousness.

The first time I fancied that I saw her breathe, I advanced quite close, with a view of convincing myself that such was the case. I was instantly stopped by the doctor:

"Keep back—important crisis—five minutes—all over—life or death."

The M.D. was right. The next five minutes worked wonders, for, to my great joy, at the expiration of them, it was evident that my Emily was recovering. Her eyes opened, she began to breathe freely, and I was most unspeakably relieved from my anxiety by hearing her exclaim distinctly, although addressed to the doctor,

"George, George, where am I?—don't leave me!"

I was compelled to look on while the medical gentleman hushed her in my name. In a few seconds more, I was delighted to see her push him away, and signal me to her side.

Seeing that all danger was over, and having

promised to look in in the morning, the doctor took his leave.

Emily laid down, and was very soon slumbering as peacefully as if nothing had occurred.

The next morning I was, naturally, desirous of knowing through what cause I, on entering the room, had so nearly lost my own consciousness. Having explained to her how I had found her, I asked her to tell me all that she could remember.

"Dear George," she began, "I remember coming up to my room, and finding the fire very low, and knowing that you would be displeased if it went out, a bright thought struck me. I recollected having heard how our salon was heated in Paris by means of a stove, which I had seen myself replenished with fuel, so I went for some charcoal, and made up the fire myself. I was delighted to find how successfully it burnt, and was thinking how pleased you would be, when suddenly the room seemed to become so unusually close, that I felt on the point of fainting, and I

remember making my way towards the door to call you. This, dear, is all I know about it, and is perfectly true."

This all was quite sufficient. Now I understood everything.

"My dear!" I exclaimed, "how could you be so foolish as to do such a thing? Had you not fallen with your face close to the door, so as to catch the draught that blew in underneath it, you would most certainly have been suffocated."

She was astonished to hear that what was safe fuel in a stove, was not necessarily so in a fireplace.

The doctor arrived, according to his promise, but on visiting his patient, pronounced her not so well as he could wish. There were symptoms of fever, he declared, and it would be very wrong to attempt to move her; in fact, a short time after his departure she began to feel so unwell, that it was necessary to call him in again. She was suffering from a violent cold, doubtless caught from the sudden exposure to the air—the only thing, the doctor

said, that could have saved her under the circumstances. She was obliged to lay up, and in a few hours was hardly able to move without assistance.

I determined to nurse her myself. I found that there was not the least difficulty in the office. I must praise myself, because, as nobody saw how admirably I ministered to my patient's wants, my proficiency would otherwise never be known. I sat up all night, without smoking a single cigar; I doled out to my invalid the regular rations of medicine without a single mistake; I glided about the room with a slippery dexterity that the most accomplished hospital nurse might well have been proud of; and the gentleness of my fire-stirring was such, that, in handling the poker, I could not but perceive that I had a wonderfully soft touch.

Then I used to prop my poor dear wife up with a pillow, and feed her myself, and of my own accord wrap a dressing-gown round her shoulders; and never would I leave her till her own maid came and relieved guard, when I would go out for

a scamper on horseback, and snuff up all the fresh air that I could in an hour's ride. But invariably, before I returned, Emily was inquiring for me. No one, she said, understood nursing as I did, and no medicine, she declared, was palatable, if not offered to her by my hand.

Whenever I felt that she was equal to a little serious conversation, I took care to point out how desirable it was that she should really learn to concentrate all her thoughts on whatever she was saying or doing—that she should endeavour to prevent her mind from absenting itself from her body, as it had been in the habit of doing; and I reminded her that had she only given a few moments to calculate, she would, I felt sure, never have committed the injudicious act, from the effects of which she was now suffering.

"Oh! yes," she would say, "I quite see, dear George, that you are right, and that I ought to have known better in this case; but when I am left alone, I know it's very wrong, but I do enjoy so being thoroughly vacant and dispensing with all

mental presence, when I get a chance; still, as you wish it, I will try and learn to have my wits about me as, you say, other people have."

This was an important admission for her to make. She had never before said half so much. I must say I hoped that this illness might be a lesson to her, and that when she recovered, her mind and body would make a fresh amicable start, with a resolution to part company no more.

On the third day of her illness, thanks to my tender care, she was so much better as to be able to get up and walk about the room; but, what delighted me still more, she insisted on sitting down and writing in the most collected way to her mother, without pausing once to gaze listlessly on the ceiling, or forget what she was doing. I felt, at the moment, full of confidence as to the future, and when the epistle was concluded she was actually business-like enough to ask me to go and put it in the post. I instantly undertook the commission; but before leaving her, remembering that the time was approaching when she ought to take

one of her draughts, I drew her attention to the fact, shewed her which was the right bottle, and begged her to pour out the proper quantity and take it while I was absent.

I was not long gone, and returned just in time to find her about to swallow a wine-glass full of toilet vinegar, instead of the potion I had most carefully shewn her. I saw in a moment what she was about to do—the right draught being pink and the vinegar yellow—and succeeded in dashing the glass from her lips.

"Now what were you going to do again, Emily?" I cried; "really you seem bent on destroying yourself, and exhausting my patience!"

When she perceived what the mistake was which she had been so nearly making, she became extremely penitent, and told me she was very sorry.

The next day she was well enough to go downstairs. I came in as she had just sealed a note that was to put off the doctor's visits, when I observed a streak of smoke issuing from the aperture

of her pocket, and on the principle that there is never any smoke without fire, I called her attention to it. The lining was all in a blaze—and no wonder! She had lit a paper match preparatory to sealing her letter, and instead of blowing it out, as anyone else would have done, or throwing it into the fire, she had put it in her pocket; for there were the remnants of it still!

Thus in one week my wife had been nearly suffocated, had stood a fair chance of being poisoned, and might, very possibly, have been burnt to death. All of which occurrences had been prevented by my timely interference.

CHAPTER VI.

"For how
Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?"

MILTON.

I ONCE heard of an author who, for a long time, employed himself in getting up a series of flirtations with young ladies. In each case coquetting with their hopes and fears as to his intentions, drawing out their tenderest feelings, and comparing notes as to the consistency and susceptibility of their various hearts. This occupation was undertaken with a view of making himself thoroughly conversant with all the specimens of

the genus *demoiselle* that he could meet with. Then, suddenly, he would withdraw his attentions from each young lady in her turn, mystifying one and all as to his reason; the mystery was cleared up one day, for all those young ladies who had gone through the ordeal of his examination, found that he had given their history a birth in a book which he published soon after, entitled "Woman's Heart."

As the casualties which happen to wives are not frequent enough to admit of any one husband being able to enjoy the succession of more than three or four, which is not enough to enable him to write a practical dissertation on wives in general, the world is obliged to put up with such memoirs of particular cases as come in their way, and from them form their own conclusions. Even Bluebeard, who could have told us a thing or two, omitted to do so, and we only know that King Henry the Eighth went through a long series of better halves which did not suit him.

It often struck me that in any illustrative work

upon wives, my own might very well have found a place, she being by no means a common specimen; for although it might not be impossible to find a duplicate of the character, still that would hardly prove that she was not a rare species.

At length, this week, so pregnant with dangers and risks as to her preservation, came to an end. Every trace of indisposition seemed to have disappeared, and I got all my moveable property under weigh, and into an hotel in Brook Street, without any accident. It was an immense time since I had been in London; and really, under the present circumstances, it was quite like visiting a new metropolis. I found so many fresh faces wherever I went, such a thoroughly new race of men about town, shopkeepers, waiters, &c., compared with those I remembered in my day, that at first I felt as a stranger in the land; and when I passed through the fashionable thoroughfares, I found that a new family of *flaneurs* had sprung up, and superseded those of yesterday.

Though it was decidedly wrong of me to enter-

tain any regret for bachelor rights and privileges, and though Goldsmith would perhaps have been shocked at the idea of his lines being quoted in connection with a scene so different to that for which they were composed—still I thought of those deserted village words :—

> "Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,
> Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain."

However, I don't mean to say I really wished myself back to the days of my follies and extravagances—far from it. The memory of Clara Hindley was not dead within me. Had I not become acquainted with her in the midst of my career, I might have sunk with a millstone of misery round my neck.

Living in a family hotel with a wife and servant was, too, such a novel bit of London life to me, that I was at first as much lost as Bucephalus would have been to find himself suddenly in a London cab.

Emily and I used to live as other young married people do in town. We had a great deal of

walking; we had our brougham, and used to exhibit in it, and I fancied that men who saw us were looking with anything but an eye of pity upon me and my position. Then we would of course sometimes ride in the Park (but then all young married couples do that sort of thing at times).

When we promenaded in Kensington Gardens, as we did occasionally, I must say I felt great satisfaction if I saw people nudging each other as we advanced; as much as to say, "Look, that's the great heiress, renowned for combining wealth and beauty; and that's her husband!" And when I heard whispers such as "She *is* very pretty!"—"What a lucky dog!" I felt that I was a great personage; but then she looked so well, and walked so gracefully, none would ever have imagined that she had that little failing which troubled me so much.

I was not happy—that is, not near so happy as I should have been. I took my wife to the play, to the opera, and to dine with various friends, who turned up in large quantities as the season came on, and, in fact, went everywhere where pleasure-

seekers go; but from the third day of my arrival in London, I commenced what doctors would style an alteration for the worse in my spirits. It was only with the greatest effort that I could be cheerful and companionable to my wife. I spent far too much time in imprecating the evil genius which I declared still stuck to me; and I felt restive in mind when I thought of how indissoluble was that invisible yoke that now restrained me, and from which it was useless to attempt to struggle. I became more miserable than I liked to show myself, and anyone but Emily would have seen that I was much changed, in spite of my endeavour to conceal it.

She could be jealous when there was no cause, and put out without any real reason; and yet I could feign good spirits in her presence, and appear cheerful when I was not so, without her being able to see the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit. Not that I was the least neglectful towards her. Sunday morning found me prepared to start for any church she liked; at

almost any week-day hour I was ready to accompany her whenever I was wanted; I never refused my escort for any reasonable evening expedition—and therefore I don't think I deserved being taken to task. I liked her still. I am sure I did, because I felt proud when I heard her praised, and was always pleased when either admiring eyes or glasses were turned upon her; but it was, I fear, something of the same sort of pleasure that one feels for a purchase a friend has instigated one to make, and which everybody approves of. You are compelled to like it because they like it; but for all that, your choice was not really an independent one, and your satisfaction is not complete.

Why was it that apathy was dwelling in me instead of adoration—indifference rather than admiration—discontent in the place of satisfaction? The reader will get the reason presently.

Among the many friends and acquaintances of former days whom chance and their own destiny threw in my way, I met none with greater pleasure

than dear old Lord Arlington. I came across him one day when Emily was on my arm. He shook me by the hand in the same hearty way as when we parted at Folkestone two years before. I had been informed by a mutual friend that, during my absence, he had—to make use of a French idiom —"eaten a great deal of money;" but, anyhow, it did not seem to have done any harm to his constitution, as he was still as stout and healthy-looking as ever, and wore the same rubicund complexion which the ravages of time had not yet succeeded in discolouring.

"How do you do, old fellow?" he exclaimed, as he squeezed my hand; "who *would* have thought of seeing you here? It seems a century since we met. Come and see me, and let's have a talk over old days."

I promised him that I would, and he gave me his town address.

"By-the-bye," he continued, "come and stay with me next week down in the country. I have got several old friends coming to see me; and,"

said he, looking towards Emily, "you can bring any friend you like with you."

I interrupted him to introduce my wife. He looked as if he had been suddenly seized with a fit of the staggers, and his hat, which he always wore a trifle on one side, was within an ace of quitting its precarious situation. I promised to go and look him up as soon as ever I was off duty; and we wished each other a temporary good-bye.

The next day I went to see him. It was eleven o'clock in the forenoon. I found him making a light meal off a cigarette and a cup of coffee, and got up in the most oriental of loose undresses, restrained by cords and tassels—the whole suit looking as if it might have been safely licensed to hold six people instead of one. I sat down to do half-an-hour's bachelorship with him.

"So you're spliced then, old fellow," he began; "by Jove! I was astonished when you told me! But I've got over it now, for, after all, one sees such strange things now-a-days happening to one's

friends. It was only the other day I heard that poor Horatio (you remember he came up to Trinity with us) had had a paralytic stroke; then he has been living on tobacco and cognac for years, you know; and, only a short time ago, I was told that Charlie Tyrell had turned Roman Catholic—then, you remember, he used always to have high church candlesticks in his rooms, and Puseyite frames to his pictures. But I must say I was regularly taken aback when you said that that lady was your wife. You might have prepared a fellow for such a startling piece of news as that, or broke it to one less abruptly."

I couldn't help smiling at his words; but he had so many questions to ask me, and I had so many enquiries to make after old friends, that I half forgot myself, as we conversed together, that I had ceased to be a member of the great bachelor fraternity.

"How's D'Arcy?" inquired Lord Arlington of me, after a pause.

"Goodness knows," I replied, "I haven't seen

him for a long time, and certainly have no particular wish to do so now."

"Haven't seen him!" said Lord Arlington, looking half incredulous.

"No," I continued; "what on earth should make you think so?"

He looked at me as if more surprised than he knew how to explain, and as if some argument was going on in his own mind that he could not bring to a satisfactory conclusion.

"I hope you got what I—sent—all—right," he at length said, in as delicate a way as he could.

I informed him that I understood nothing of what he was saying.

"I mean the £100," he replied.

Still I was in the dark as to his meaning.

"Why, you don't mean to say you didn't get the £100 note I sent?" he exclaimed.

I had certainly received nothing of the sort from him, and told him so.

"The villain!" he cried; "I see through it all now. I had a sort of suspicion at the time.

Would you believe it, he wrote to me from Boulogne, declaring you were arrested for 2,500 francs, which he said was equivalent to £100, and that, owing to the severities of French laws, you could not write in person to me, but had commissioned him to ask for the loan of this sum for you. I sent it off at once to his address, and he returned thanks in your name. Tell me," he demanded, "what you know of this matter?"

"Well," I replied, "I am sorry to say I know nothing about it, and am glad to say that I never saw the interior of a Boulogne prison, or any other. I fear that it is a regular case of swindling. I saw the fellow once," I added, "as I passed through that town, when he seemed to be commanding great respect amongst a certain class of men. He was uncommonly anxious to 'bring me out' in that Anglified watering-place, I declined the honour, and I cannot tell you how sorry I am to find that he has been using my name in such an unwarrantable way. Heaven knows where he may now be," I continued, "otherwise perhaps we

might have him taken into custody. But, my dear Arlington, much as I thank you for the kindness you intended to do me, don't you think you ought to have considered a moment whether it was likely that I should have made such a request through another, and particularly through such a rascal as D'Arcy?"

"Well, yes, certainly, perhaps I should," he admitted; "but then, you know, I thought perhaps D'Arcy might have reformed in his old age; and he put in a postscript, that he was thinking of accepting the office of English Consul, which had been offered to him."

I cannot express how sorry I was that my friend had been so victimised, for I had no doubt that such was the case. Somehow or other, it seems to me that Boulogne and reformation are two nouns between which there is little or no connection.

Why is it, I wonder, that in this corrective age, no sanguine philanthropists have yet put their heads and subscriptions together to build a penitentiary

at Boulogne? Why is it that the "oi polloi" of expatriated English are suffered to waste their time in idling about the town, going through the daily excitement of assembling to gaze at uninteresting steamboats coming from or going to a land which was once their own, but which now knows them not. Why is it, I ask, that some zealous society, raging with a desire to reform the world, has never thought of erecting at Boulogne an establishment in which people could go through a process of mind-purification, and then be sent back refined and clarified to the mother country.

"Arlington," said I, "you must let me repay you this hundred pounds which you so kindly sent, intending it for me."

"Oh! no, no, I will not hear of that," he said; "but I won't send any more such remittances to the Continent. And so you have really 'gone in' for matrimony," he continued, by way of changing the subject; "and do you find that it agrees with you?"

"Oh! it's very pleasant in some respects," I

replied; "but I have only been married a few weeks, and haven't done much of the humdrum part of it, which is to come—such as sitting before the fire with your wife, having nothing to talk about; but after all, that is I suppose an acquired taste, like olives or caviare, and most people get to like one as well as the other after a bit."

Lord Arlington then informed me that he had got through a considerable deal of money since his first *debût* in the world, and that his anxious solicitors had already began to advise no less decisive a remedy in his case than a rich heiress.

"But you see," he continued, "that's all very fine. Heiresses don't spring up like mushrooms; and there are lots of girls, nowadays, reputed to have any number of thousands, but when you investigate the case, why, they turn out to be only fungus fortunes, worthless, that no sensible man would be taken in with. However, my men of business are going to look round, and see what there is in the city worth looking after. If

they can find anything eligible, they are to let me know, and then I am to put my name to the bill —no, no, I don't mean that—then I am to come forward, and see if the affair will suit me."

"Well, if I can be of any use to you," I replied, "I shall be delighted. I am going to take a house in London; only introduce any people you like to me and my wife, and we will ask them to meet you at our house as often as you like."

"Now, that's what I call friendly and kind," said Lord Arlington. "If I ain't married, before long, to something good, all I can say, it's a pity. By-the-bye, do you know Macduff?" he asked.

I said that I knew him by sight, and no more.

"A very useful fellow!" he proceeded. "I've met him about, at different clubs; and he asked me one day, why I didn't marry. 'Ah! there it is!' I replied. 'I want to marry, but I want some money as well.' "Well, would

you believe it?" continued Lord Arlington; "he showed me a list of heiresses, as long as your arm, all described as accurately as a lot of 'two year olds' for sale; and he's going to look out for me. If he succeeds in finding what I want, then—but this part of the bargain, mind, is a strict secret—I am to give him five per cent. out of her first year's income."

What an extraordinary arrangement, I could not help thinking! Poor Macduff, it seemed, turned his "heiress list" to more accounts than one. There are a great many different ways of earning an honest penny in every large town, but I had never heard of this one before. One lives and learns, however.

"And Macduff told me," said Lord Arlington, "that he all but won the largest prize of the year, this season, in Paris, thanks to good information. That's to say, he could have had her, if he had liked, he declared; but he gave her up, at the last moment, for some reason or other."

"Really!" said I. "Who was this girl? I

don't remember hearing about it, and I was in Paris this last season."

"The girl's name was Rivers," replied Lord Arlington.

"Rivers!" I exclaimed, raising my voice as high as it would go. "He proposed to Miss Rivers!"

"Yes," said Lord Arlington; "and she accepted him, too, at a fancy-ball; but, it seems, he wasn't quite satisfied with something or other afterwards, and the matter ended in smoke."

"Proposed to Miss Rivers—at a fancy-ball—accepted—and then not satisfied. This must be cleared up!" I vociferated, more to myself than to my friend.

Then, suddenly rising, I took a most abrupt leave of my friend, rushed out, without waiting to hear a parting remark that he holloed out after me; edifying it may have been, but it was, unfortunately, shut in with him; and I made the best of my way homewards.

"Emily," said I, as soon as I found myself in

her presence, "tell me the truth—did Macduff propose to you at the Comtesse de Machaul's ball?"

She immediately blushed crimson, and I saw could not deny that he had.

"And you accepted him, also, that night, Emily?" I continued.

Still I got no negative answer.

"Oh! Emily, Emily," said I, in an excited tone, "I didn't think this of you! Fool that I was to be made your dupe! I know the rest. He was not satisfied about some matter or other, and backed out, and then you——"

My sentence was cut short by a grand sensation sobbing scene; but though it was very well got up, it had not the same effect as its predecessors, and the mere thought that I had been forced forward to occupy the position of a *pis aller*, to take the place of such a fellow as Macduff, destroyed the effect that the touching sound of my wife's sobs would otherwise have made upon me.

However, my feelings were on the point of giving way, when, luckily, the sobs spontaneously abated, and Emily made the following confession:—

"Dear George, you mustn't, you can't be angry with me. You know how unfeelingly you behaved to me on the afternoon before the ball. You wouldn't look at me, you wouldn't speak to me. Much as I loved you, I believed that you were purposely cold to me. At that critical moment that horrid Mr. Macduff came and proposed to me; in a reckless moment I accepted him; then you suddenly appeared as I was leaving the ball. You remember how softly you spoke—and then came that pretty carnation you so kindly offered, which I accepted instead of him—and papa went to him the next morning, and told him that I had changed my mind. Dear George," she added, "there's the whole unvarnished truth, and that wicked man shan't take you from me, or make you angry with me because I——"

A shower of sobs concluded the sentence, and

the scene ended in the most satisfactory way—Emily in my arms, peace proclaimed, and the mystery cleared up.

We invited Lord Arlington to dine with us that evening. He came, and the pride with which I presented to him Mrs. George Carlton, late Miss Rivers, was even greater than the astonishment which he felt when he heard me. Of course Macduff had told his own story, and made the best of it. A vanquished foe seldom admits an unequivocal defeat.

Lord Arlington talked very little during dinner, and seemed much more comfortable when Emily retired, and we were left alone.

"Hanged if I shan't marry!" was his first exclamation, as the door closed. "I'm sure it's much jollier dining at home with a pretty companion, who is all one's own, before one, than replenishing oneself at the club, with nothing to look at but a lot of uninteresting fellows, punctually fed by a waiter, or ruminating over the *Globe*. Yes, I'll be married before a week's over. I'll burn all my

lounging suits, and order in a lot of drawing-room clothes."

"Well, you know," I replied, "it requires a deal of consideration. Matrimony is all chance work. You are captivated with appearances, or whatever else you see to admire, and if the object of your fancy will have you, you pay addresses, and you take your choice."

"Take your choice, be hanged!" said Lord Arlington. "You talk of matrimony as you would of buying a horse at Tattersall's. I look upon a fair lady in a very different way to what you do. Don't you remember at Cambridge, when we proposed the health of the 'Ladies,' some fellow of a poetical turn used to get up, and always begin by saying, 'There *is* a shrine at which we all worship,' and, in the same way as Dr. Watts's hymn made an impression on me as I rocked in the cradle, so, since Cambridge, I have always regarded the tender sex as a cut above us poor men. One goes into a fashionable ball-room where there is a throng of miscellaneous angels, all in the

market, guarded by maternal-looking dowager angels, whose day is gone by; and then you see a lot of Calebs picking and choosing among these divinities, inviting them to take a waltz round the room, preparatory to a walk to the Altar. I say," he added, more earnestly, "the custom is a relic of barbarism. The order of things ought to be reversed. Ladies should propose, and dispose of themselves just as they like. The present arrangement seems to be as unnatural as the slave trade!"

I got up to ring for the second bottle of port at this stage of the conversation.

"Well," I replied, "judging from my own experience, I am not so sure that the system you advocate is so very far distant."

I couldn't really help thinking that I had a right to say so.

"We may live to see far more extraordinary social changes than this. Indeed, I have known cases where ladies have chosen for themselves—ah! and proposed as warily and cautiously as the sharpest of us."

"What! in a regular business-like way?" he asked.

"Well, you know, ladies have their own way of doing things," I replied, "and, of course, a necessary supply of luring smiles, and ocular ogling, is brought into action for the occasion."

"By Jove! I'll marry the first pretty girl who'll have me!" cried Lord Arlington;" "hang the money and the solicitors!"

"Of course, with your position and means," I observed, "you will not meet with many rebuffs in your search of a wife; but I should recommend caution. Don't delude yourself so far as to believe that perfection of character and temper is a necessary adjunct to a pretty face; or that beauty, unsupported by sterling good qualities, will carry a person through the wear and tear of a lifetime."

"Ah! that's all very well," he replied, "if it is a question of a ballet dancer, or a *prima donna;* but a pretty girl in good society, I maintain, must have a refined mind, and if she gives trouble, or goes wrong in

any way, depend upon it, it's the fault of the man who marries her, who forgets to give her a treat on her birthday, or humour her with an occasional *cadeau*."

Just at that moment we were disturbed in our discussion by hearing the flutter of fugitive petticoats in the street, succeeded by violent shouts of,

"'" Stop wife!—stop wife!"

We were dining on the ground-floor, and the window was open, as it was a fine night. It was evident that some unusual street scene was taking place, although there was no particularly large crowd in attendance. However, rather than lose it, we rushed out of doors to see what was going on.

The graceful figure of a bonnetless lady was flying about the pavement, at Newmarket speed, apparently winning easy; whilst, toiling along behind her, in hot pursuit, might have been seen a very determined but slow-coach edition of a military-looking man, imploring those ahead to

stop his wife, as he swung awkwardly along, every moment left more in the lurch by the fair figure he was vainly endeavouring to overtake.

Passers by seemed little inclined to spoil sport, and rather preferred getting quietly out of the way of the case and looking on. We followed, of course, taking up a good place among the first flight, and although we had joined accidentally, as it were, in the run, we seemed to be in for a good thing, when a most inopportune old gentleman, of extensive latitude, and unwieldy action, coming up the street, shoved himself right in the way. Alas! the flying lady, still as fresh as when she started, ran right into his waistcoat, and, before she had time to make a fresh start, was captured by her pursuer.

Judge of my astonishment, on pulling up breathlessly at the finish, when I discovered that the chased one was Rosie Acton.

She was in a towering passion. All the old symptoms were plainly visible: frowns, knitted eyebrows, and fiery eyes, and she was just about

to cast the full weight of her displeasure upon her captor, who was her husband, when she suddenly caught sight of me.

"Oh! Mr. Carlton! Mr. Carlton," she exclaimed, in an excited tone, "I'm sure you've dropped from the skies to take my part in a moment of persecution! Is it not unmanly, disgusting, atrocious, to treat me in this way?"

Being appealed to, of course I advanced to know what was the matter.

"Oh, matter!" she cried. "If you only knew how he behaves to me! I wanted particularly to go to the theatre to-night, to see the new drama, and he positively refused to take me, saying that he had the rheumatism. Mr. Carlton, I ask you is it not unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, not yet thirty years old, to have such an absurd ailing as rheumatic pain?"

Poor Rosie! I was very much concerned for her, but, not knowing this good man, how could I assist her?

"Oh, Rosie," I replied, "you mustn't make a

scene in the street about this matter, you'll collect a crowd."

"I had the pleasure of knowing her at Homburg," I turned round and observed to her husband, who was looking as if he would like to eat me. "Don't you think you had better take that cab which is coming up?"

"I think I had," was the dissatisfied reply; and after some little difficulty, and a look from me significative of my advice to her, he managed to entice her in, and drove home with her.

This was the first time I had seen the fair Rosie since I left her, laid up with the broken arm at the farm, near Homburg. It was not much more than a year ago, yet how much had circumstances altered since that time. We were then, both of us free as the winds that blow, and, let people say what they would, we could then do as we liked. I had now a wife to take care of; she a husband, whom, however fast he might have been once, she could now distance at any moment.

I heard from very good authority that she was

as happy as possible, but that she still loved to indulge in an occasional display of refractory temper, and the enjoyment of a runaway freak now and then.

"What a beautiful creature!" said Lord Arlington, who had seen all, like myself.

"Yes," I replied; "but, in spite of her good looks, rather a difficult vessel to steer, you see!"

My remark was not to be refuted, and this my friend, sagaciously, did not attempt.

We walked back to my hotel, where, over a cup of coffee, I related to him the little history of my Homburg friend. It seemed to amuse him, and when he put on his hat and wished me good night, with the incident of the evening still fresh in his memory, I am sure that his previous conviction about beauty being the only attribute requirable to render a wife charming, was somewhat shaken.

I am sorry to say that my wife's absent fits continued to recur in the most alarming way. In-

stances by the dozen I should have no difficulty in citing, but they would only weary the reader and annoy me to recall them. One day she stopped in her brougham, and asked a man about town, whom she mistook for me, if he would like to be taken up; but, as she addressed him as George, and his name was John, he suspected some mistake, and declined the honour.

When she returned home, she upbraided me for having preferred walking to driving with her. I had not left the house, and could not understand what she meant. However, I happened to stand close to two men in the park once, and heard one observe to the other respecting my wife, who passed at the moment in her carriage—"That's the lady who offered to take me for a drive the other day." I had been informed that one of these men and myself were considered as like as two peas, or, as the French say, as like as two drops of water. I remembered, too, how Emily had taken me to task a short time back, and this was the key to the mystery. However, it was no

use making a scene about it. Luckily, she was not in the habit of performing the same vagary twice; and if I cautioned her against a repetition of one *bètise*, she would certainly pay attention to me respecting it, but that was no reason why she should not go and do something equally absurd directly afterwards.

It was very annoying to find she had left our cards on the tax-gatherer, and ordered in a large supply of coals at the door of some crack friends on our visiting list; but what was the use of making a piece of work about it.

"She didn't do it on purpose," she would have said, and what should I have gained by contradicting her?

It is a curious thing that I did not discover this eccentricity before our marriage; but it is so often the case that one sees only fascinations first and faults afterwards, and it so happened that I never had caught her in an absent vein. Doubtless, her parents, who had looked upon her as perfection, had rather admired her wandering turn of mind, and

never dreamt of trying to keep it within bounds. But it is of no use grumbling against the lot that destiny metes out to one.

One day, as I was passing through Wilton Place, I saw a furnished house to be let, to which I took a great fancy; and as we had already decided to make London our head-quarters, at all events for the present, I went to inspect it. I liked it excessively, and after a little bargaining, took it for three years. We moved in at once. Then came trouble and bother, which I thought would never cease. Portly cooks of the female gender offered themselves for culinary preferment, and insisted on a hearing. More house-maids and kitchen-maids applied for the places than would have dusted and washed up half the families in the parish; and footmen and pages presented themselves with no end of manuscript reputations, all of which they expected to be read. I cannot express how thankful I was when the construction of our establishment was completed, and the house arranged in ship-shape order.

CHAPTER VII.

"L'absence fait à l'amour, ce que fait le vent au feu, il eteint le petit, il augmente le grand."

I MUST now retrace my steps, and go back to the third day after we reached London. Alas! would that that morning had never dawned, or rather that my footsteps and my inclination had not then led me where they did. It was very natural that for the first two days after our arrival, considering the long stay I had made abroad, and the length of time that had elapsed since I was last in town, my time should have been occupied as it was in numerous ways. My presence was required, too, at home, where I had many things to

see to. I had letters to write, various business arrangements to attend to; then my wife had to be taken to her different tradesmen, and I had to give more orders to one and the other than were ever given on the longest of field-days—in fact, I made myself generally useful, and particularly amiable.

But, on the third day, having set the machinery of my establishment in motion with a fair start, immediately after breakfast I took my hat and sallied forth, with nothing but my ordinary safe-guard against showers. It was an old umbrella which I had had for years; it had been knocked about with me in my old London days, it had travelled over half the Continent with me; and now, done up in a new suit of silk, was as sound and fresh as ever.

Mine was not a singular attachment, for where do you ever see an English gentleman without his umbrella? Abroad he is as well known by it, as the old spire is by its vane, London by its smoke, or an American by his twang. And yet

he cares as little for a shower of rain as anyone. A Frenchman always says, when there is an umbrella found, there is pretty sure to be an Englishman handy. Let him be as changeable in his affection, his style of dress, and his companions, as you like, he is always constant to his umbrella.

In the brightest days of "spring's unclouded weather," it always accompanies him in his walks; and when the driest cold of winter is chilling every joint of his fingers, ten to one but he is grasping its handle in his right hand as he strides along. Let people say what they like, it is a comfortable thing to carry. It is useful as well as ornamental, whilst a cane is only the latter.

It was a beautiful morning of the merry month of May, the sun was shining, and the smutty sparrows on their peculiar housetops seemed to be keeping up a sort of recitative of running chaff with their opposite neighbours, not, as it seemed to me, though perhaps it was all imagination, like the simple chattering and chirping of country birds, but differing from that in the same sort of way as

the more knowing banter of London cabmen differs from the less sophisticated jocularity of country flymen.

As I wended my way along the pavement towards Bond Street, I meditated in my mind as to where I should go. Should I lounge about and look at the fashions of the day in the shop windows (for two years absence had made me dreadfully behind hand in London knowledge); should I go and pay Lord Arlington another morning visit, or should I ramble on without an object, save that of indulging my eyesight on whatever it fancied, and contrasting the natives of this metropolis with those of capitals on the other side of the water. No, I would do none of these things.

How very curious it was that I had not thought of it before! I would go straight to my club in Pall Mall, and read the papers, and have a look at the old place, where I had passed so many hours of my previous town-life. Thither I went. There was the old building, looking as domestic as ever. I went up those familiar steps which

I had so often trodden, and passed by the old porter, who, I am quite sure, had long ceased to remember me; in fact, he could not have stared at an antediluvian monster walking into the club, with greater astonishment than he did at myself. However, I had always paid my subscription, so I passed on and made my way into the principal room.

It was still very early. The *élite* of the lookers in among the constant members had not yet made their appearance, but there was a fair sprinkling present of the early rising *habitués*, who come in good time to cram themselves with all the literary food they can get out of the establishment, who have their own particular chairs, their hats their own peculiar pegs, and whose Penates have long ago been moved from private lodgings, and housed in the public sitting-room of the club.

At one table might be seen a young man evidently risen before his regular time, bustling through a letter of business, or a love-letter, preparatory to starting for the country, with a haste

unmistakeably suggestive of not a moment to spare, and a drive against time to the coach-office. At another was a gentleman equally pressed for time, having snatched a few moments from a neighbouring bank, in order to devour simultaneously the columns of the *Times* and a hurried luncheon.

More from the force of old habit than for any other reason, I went up to the latter table, and suffered my eye to glance over the miscellaneous collection of ancient and modern epistles strewed out in order, and waiting the arrival of their several claimants. Scarcely had I reached the table, when I caught sight of a letter addressed to me, in a handwriting which I had not forgotten. It was from Mr. Hindley!

I took it up, without at first having courage to open it. I cannot describe the effect that the sight of the letter had upon me. My hand trembled as I examined it. The date of the post-mark was two years old, and the letter had been directed to me originally at Winchester, then for-

warded to Portsmouth, and thence to the Club. Two long years had this epistle lain unopened on the table. Thousands of eyes must have rested momentarily upon it, but be the contents what they might, there was nothing about the exterior which could make the casual observer suppose that the letter was one of importance.

Could it be an announcement of my Clara's death? Some last deathbed message, transmitted to me from her by a loving parent? Or, what I believe would have given me more pain even, wrong though the feeling would have been, was it to inform me that she was about to be another's? Every sort of sinister foreboding crossed my mind. That it was about Clara, I felt convinced; that I was going to receive some violent shock to my feelings, presentiment forwarned me. Perhaps, even, it was to inform me of something more grievous than I had yet divined.

It may seem strange and improbable, but I dreaded, with all the terror of superstitious fear, to open the letter and make myself master of its

contents. But there is no pain that racks the heart like that of real suspense. In the first moments of uncertainty, suspecting the worst, yet still clinging to the illusion that all may still be well, the mind goes through an inexplicable intermediate state between hope and fear, which it is at first loth to quit; but the period is of short duration. The excitement to which one is a prey becomes too intense to be endured, one yearns for the most heartrending truth, in the place of alarming mystery, and prefers the worst even that imagination can suggest, to the trying interim of uncertain ignorance.

Such was my case. The first unsettled moments of restless anxiety having passed away, I resolved to terminate my suspense. I broke the seal of my letter and unfolded its contents. It ran as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Carlton,—Were it not that I must ever feel grateful to you as the preserver of my dear child's life, and that our friendship was formed in the days when the deepest sorrow of my

adversity was full upon me, I should feel much delicacy in addressing myself to you. The nature of your last interview with her was unknown to me at the time, but almost immediately after your departure I found Clara giving way to a paroxysm of grief in a flood of tears. I was dreadfully alarmed, knowing the weak state of her health, but on my questioning her as to the cause of her sorrow, she confided to me what had taken place. I felt for her sincerely, and in my full confidence that you were a man of honour, I could not help feeling for you also.

"Doubtless her conviction that in marrying you under the circumstances, she should bring you to sorrow, inspired as that conviction was by the sad example of her own parents' case, must have caused you to respect her. I am sure that you will hear with pleasure that the few months which have elapsed since we parted have produced a great change in my affairs.

"You may remember that in my early life Sir Archibald Wilmer, in consequence, as was alleged,

of a promise he had made to my father in his dying moments, took me under his protection. Owing to a melancholy accident, which it will ever be most painful to me to look back upon, you may also remember that I took the step of leaving the home with which he had provided me, and started forth in the wide world to seek my fortune. You are aware how adverse had been my attempts to enrich myself, and how resolutely prosperity continued to frown upon me.

"About three months after you left Cowes, I received a communication from Sir Archibald's solicitor, informing me of his death, and that he had, at the last moment, declared me to be his legitimate son, had left me heir to his title and property, expressing a desire that every possible step should be taken to discover where I was living. Thus, through an unfortunate act, which will always be to me a source of the greatest mental sorrow, whenever I think of it, it has pleased Providence that I should eventually be raised from a state of poverty to that of affluence.

"I repeat that I am aware of the nature of your last interview with my dear child, and the only addition that I can think of making to this letter is to express a hope that if you have time and inclination, you will come down to Pembury Manor, and pass a few days with us.

"I am, dear Mr. Carlton,

"Yours sincerely,

"MARK (HINDLEY) WILMER."

What my feelings were on reading this letter, I am really unequal to describe! That Clara, whom I had really loved so sincerely, might have been mine, I could of course plainly see. By referring to the date of my letter, I calculated that it had been written at the time I was on the stage at Wolverhampton. Alas! had I then known all! had I been venturesome enough to seek out the Hindleys the morning after I saw them at the theatre, all would have been well. My father would have paid my debts, and I should have been enabled to lead to the altar the only

girl I really ever loved, in the genuine sense of the word.

Oh! that I could have put myself back two years in life—that I could live over again the whole of the period since I first met dear Clara! Those ecstatic moments that I had passed in her society!

That they would ever return was, of course, an absurdity. Yet, from the time that I first made her acquaintance, I had began to loathe my career of extravagance and folly. Never, I believe, till now, when the fact was revealed to me, that happiness had been within my grasp, if I had only had the intelligence to stretch out my hand, and take it, did I really know how much I had loved her.

It is true, that when I married I knew that I was taking leave of those illusions that every now and then, like an *ignis fatuus*, will exhibit itself ambiguously to one, as one wanders along the dark path of a life without hope; it is true that I felt, when I married Emily, that I must put away from my

mind the memory of Clara; but, then, I believed she had gone irrecoverably from my gaze, and that, in continuing to entertain feelings of affection for her, I was only courting sorrow, and keeping alive in me a recollection of disappointed love beyond the natural term of its existence.

"Oh," I inwardly exclaimed, "that I could only be as free as I was a few months ago!"

This was idle and not very sensible; but I could not help such desires.

Why was it that presentiment had not, ere it was too late, whispered encouragement in my ear, and bade me wait awhile, and hope, before I gave up all as lost; but, no! that instinctive foresight which anticipates coming events, when they are to be dreary and dismal, shrinks too often from manifesting the brighter events of futurity, the lights from which would give him vigour to drag through a long intermediate state of sorrow and suffering.

Had the vaguest idea ever crossed my mind that some unforeseen occurrence might arise in

the uncertainty of time, which would cause Clara to overcome her scruples, nothing, I am certain, would have ever tempted me to marry another. To gain her hand, I would have undergone the severest and longest bondage. What would I not have endured, with her as the promised Rachel to look forward to, as the prize of servitude! But as it was, I was in the melancholy position of being wedded to a girl, of whom I had, all along, been struggling to be fond, and endeavouring to persuade myself that such was the case; while my eyes were now opened to the fact that I might have married the one adorable creature whom I should have selected without hesitation for my wife, even if I had had the whole world of womankind to choose from.

But what was the use of calculating what I should have done, if circumstances had been different? It was very wrong of me to encourage even a momentary feeling of regret in my present position. Yet I did regret, and every instant seemed to have additional cause for so doing.

I could, of course, conclude that, Clara being an only child, she had now become heiress to her father's newly-acquired estates.

How different would have been my position, if this communication had reached me any time during the period I passed abroad, previous to that fatal carnation gift, at the *bal costumé*, in Paris. Then, it was aggravating that out of so many brother-officers and friends, who belonged to the same club as myself, and whom I had met on the Continent, especially latterly in Paris, not one had conceived the bright thought of communicating to me that this letter, which, as the postmark declared, had so long ago escaped from the postman's hand, was lying at the Club for me.

What might have happened, too, in the long interval that had elapsed since it had been written? An interval of two years! How probable was it that I had been forgotten? Clara might, so very possibly, have learned, from some good-natured friend, how low I had sunk in the scale of life, ere I rose to the surface, deter-

mined to save myself yet; and, listening to the usual exaggerations, she might have concluded that I was worthless.

Then, there was that other dreadful contingency which would have been more painful to me—she might belong already to another! Not only, perhaps, was I forgotten, but supplanted! I could not bear to contemplate its possibility.

When first I read this document, and until I had accustomed myself to meditate over its contents with calmness, I could not help feeling that my matrimonial existence was in a precarious state, and that my wife was constantly in danger of finding herself left suddenly husbandless. Had anyone told me that Miss Hindley was dying in some distant quarter of the globe, or that my presence was requisite for her safety and protection, wherever she might be—it may have been wrong—but I feel sure that I should instantaneously have fled to that blessed corner of the earth where she was to be found.

The shock my heart had suffered was of a severe

nature, and it was some days before it returned to its usual regular pulsation. Yet in the days of firm resolutions, of good behaviour, and dutiful conduct, little did I dream of being put to such a trial as the present.

But time works wonders, and had discovered to me the fact that my freshly-animated love for Clara would require a more violent effort to destroy than I felt disposed to make.

Not that from the date of my reading this letter I began to neglect my wife. On the contrary, I took especial pains to be attentive to her, only I had to strive harder than before to keep in view that standard of good behaviour which society recognises. In public, I attended her quite as much as I ought, though, instead of its being a pleasure to me, I must confess that I looked upon it as a duty. It was a duty, also, that I went through with more or less of fear, for I used frequently, when walking and driving with her, to imagine that I saw approaching features that resembled Clara's, and I was only relieved when they advanced near

enough for me to satisfy my mind that I was mistaken.

Sometimes, with a vague presentiment that my eye was about to discover her name, I would read the marriage announcements in the *Morning Post*, and I was uncomfortable till I had at length got through them without a shock. I really believe I should have been far less afflicted had I found her among the deaths.

The uncertainty as to what had become of her during the last two years, inspired me with such torturing curiosity—fearing as I did the worst—and having really nothing definite to hope for, that there were times when I could with the greatest difficulty refrain from telling all my sorrows to Emily. I felt sometimes that it would even be a weight off my mind to communicate to her the intelligence I had received, and confess to her how sincerely I still loved one, of whom she had, I verily believed, ceased to think—but for all that, I did not do so. Some grand scene, ending in a separation, would most likely have been the result, and

Clara would have been just as much out of my reach as before.

Often I felt inclined to write to Mr. Hindley, to inform him of my present position, and to crave from him all particulars respecting his daughter. But when it came to the point, I always lacked the requisite amount of courage to declare that I had become a married man; which assertion I felt would have implied that I had long since ceased to think of Clara, and that I could never have really cared for her.

Thus, in spite of my desire to know all about her, I resolved that I would not write; I endeavoured to force myself away from every thought connected with her. Uneasy and dissatisfied as I was, I made up my mind to try and be callous to and proof against regret, and to sit down and strive to become habituated to my lot.

I found that the resolution was more easily made than carried into effect. Luckily, when Emily happened to come into the room, and find me lost in a melancholy reverie, and when aware of her pre-

sence, I roused myself to consciousness, and assumed a constrained air of cheerfulness, she would have no sort of apprehension that there was anything wrong, or that I had anything weighing upon my mind; though anyone else in her place would most certainly have very soon suspected something. Even when I was out, quite alone, taking a solitary walk with my dejection, old bachelor friends swelling about with an anti-matrimonial air, whom I frequently omitted to notice even as they were passing, so wrapt up was I with my thoughts, would stop and ask me what on earth was the matter; and when I declared that I was as jolly as possible, and got away from them as quickly as I could, I am sure that they left me under the impression that I was hen-pecked at home, and melancholy mad abroad—and, regarding me as another pitiable instance of the result of matrimony taken too early, they inwardly congratulated themselves that they had not yet been gazetted as galley-slaves for life. Had any of their names already premonitarily appeared in print,

as being likely to lead someone or other to the altar, I believe that the unsatisfactory evidence that my woe-begone appearance had furnished them with, would have been almost enough to decide them to back out before it was too late, and to beg the editor to contradict the report, which had already been "whispered," in the form of a newspaper "on dit."

But it is of little use detailing neglected opportunities of happiness, and such cross-purposes of destiny. With a pretty wife, and liberally provided for in other respects, most readers will think that I had nothing to complain of—still, I maintain that I was by no means an object to be envied.

CHAPTER VIII.

"All deception in the course of life is, indeed, nothing else but a lie reduced to practice, and *falsehood* passing from words to things."

REV. R. SOUTH.

IT was soon after we got into Wilton Place, that I became acquainted with a lady, who, as Miss Cunningham, had been formerly a great friend of my wife's. There was little difference in their ages, and their personal accomplishments were about equal; as Maria was not an only child, it was very lucky that a pretty face made up for a deficiency of fortune.

For some months, Captain Chatham, of the Navy,

had been paying his addresses to her, but as her father hoped for a more advantageous match, the gallant sailor was desired to forbear his visits, and the young lady told to think of him no more.

After many fruitless struggles they acquiesced, but the discontent of both was so apparent, that it was thought advisable to remove Miss Cunningham into the country. She was sent to her widowed aunt, Lady Kingsburgh, who, with her daughter, lived retired at the family seat, more than a hundred miles distant from London.

After Maria had repined in this dreary solitude from August to January, she was surprised by a visit from Mr. Cunningham, who brought with him Sir Francis Strafford, a young man, who had early in life succeeded to a baronet's title, and was the possessor of a large estate in the country. Sir Francis had an agreeable person, and an easy address, and she became insensibly pleased with his society. Her vanity, if not her love, had a new object—a desire to be delivered from a state of dependance, had almost absorbed every other feel-

ing, and it is not to be wondered at, that she accepted his offer, especially when aided by the solicitations of her relatives.

Early in the spring the marriage was solemnized, and the happy couple arrived in the metropolis just as the season was about to commence.

One fine afternoon in June, when listening to the strains of the Guards' band at the Chiswick Horticultural *fête*, my wife and myself suddenly came upon the newly married pair, and Lady Strafford ran forward to shake Emily by the hand.

"Let me introduce you to my husband," she said, as she presented her old school acquaintance to me; "and I must return the compliment, and present you to Sir Francis—but I forgot," she continued, "I heard him say that he had passed many happy hours in your society, when he was in your neighbourhood."

A slight blush mantled my wife's cheek, as the baronet came forward in a confused manner, and held out his hand, stammering, as we made our

mutual bows, that it was a long time since he last had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Carlton.

Although I cannot say that I felt jealous, yet I could not help asking my wife how she had come to make the baronet's acquaintance. She informed me that about two years ago he had been on a reading visit with the clergyman of the parish, and having nothing to do in his leisure hours but to take constitutional walks about the country, and to make sketches of all the picturesque spots, churches, towns, and spires, in the neighbourhood, her father had taken compassion upon him, and invited him to come and dine at his house whenever he felt disposed. That in consequence she had got to know him very well, insomuch, that she had accepted his offer to teach her drawing.

One day, when he was taking great pains in instructing her to copy a sketch he had made of an attractive little village church in the neighbourhood, out of which was proceeding a youthful rustic couple, just united in holy matri-

mony, he had become so excited over the subject, that he had all of a sudden laid down his pencil, and thrown himself, his adoration, and his baronetcy at her feet; which act had taken her so thoroughly by surprise, that she had upset the portfolio, pencil, india-rubber, and run away out of the room; whereupon he had gathered up himself and the other attractions which he had offered her, and gone back with them to the parsonage, whence he had very soon after taken his departure for good.

This was all she had to tell me, except that she had heard that the principal reason why he had been sent there at all, was because the clergyman's eldest daughter was only nine years old, and it had been rumoured that love-making had sadly interfered with his Latin at his last tutor's.

I afterwards ascertained that he had become less reckless in the disposal of himself, his love, and title, subsequent to his retirement from scholastic life; that he had gone about in the fashionable world, and had taken to playing with hearts,

merely exhibiting himself as "a lot not to be sold," to be seen, admired, and coveted; till one day, in conversing with the lady to whom he was now married, he had transgressed the line of conduct he had resolved to pursue, and threw out an unguarded hint that he was again in the market; whereupon she had snapped him up, before any competition had begun for him, leaving speculative mammas to lament, for their daughter's, sakes, how great a chance had been thrown away.

Sir Francis and Lady Strafford got on pretty well together—at least, no one had a right to suppose the contrary, as they had never been known to quarrel, and always "my deared" each other in society, which, at all events, sounds very pretty; but, then, the expression comes tumbling out so mechanically and naturally from people's lips, after a little experience and custom, that the only fear is, lest it should be accidentally employed in addressing others.

After the first meeting that took place between the Straffords and us, the awkwardness, which the

recollection of the past had, at first, created, between Sir Francis and my wife, quite wore off, and we became great friends. The attachment of the two ladies seemed to be rather increased than diminished by their marriage. They rode and drove together in the Park, joined in an opera-box, and dined with and visited each other, without the slightest formality.

The frequent interviews, which this intimacy produced, between Sir Francis and my wife, caused me no great uneasiness. Affairs went on pleasantly enough. I endeavoured to make myself as happy as I could, under the circumstances; I strove to be cheerful and contented with my lot, and avoided betraying the fact that my mind was constantly wandering far away from Wilton Place, or whatever part of London I happened to be in. I daresay I often looked very moody and abstracted, not only at home, but also in company; but, then, my wife saw nothing to notice, and other people did not know what an unfortunate case mine was, and were not aware that there was

such a treasure as Clara Hindley in existence.

Days and weeks elapsed, following each other with an immense deal of similarity, as far as I was concerned, inasmuch as I continued to devote the same proportion of them to the memory of her whom I had lost sight of for so long a time. The more I indulged in conjectures regarding her, the more unhappy I became. I felt suspense was killing me; uncertainty, as to her fate, was daily making me more wretched, and the concealment of my sorrow became more and more laborious.

One day, after being more than usually low-spirited, and having worked myself up to the highest pitch of anxiety respecting her, I felt that I could bear it no longer. A sudden irresistible desire to see her once again, at any risk, to ascertain, by some means, all about her, up to the present time, and then, from that moment, to see her no more, seized upon me. I was determined to carry this out, if it could be managed in some sort of way. But how could it be done? I had no wish to meet her face to face. I did not feel equal to

that. It was only the pleasure of gazing, just for a second, once more on that lovely countenance, that I craved with an eager longing I could not resist. It seemed to me that I should be able to read in those features, placid and calm though I remembered they usually were, the sentiments of her mind; that I should be enabled to judge whether she were happy or not, and discover all I was so desirous of knowing.

I remembered how Mr. Hindley had, one day, when alluding to the days of his youth, expatiated to me on the beauty of the grounds, in the immediate proximity of the Manor House, the splendid ornamental clumps of the rhododendrons that grew close to the house, the beautiful bosquets of rare evergreens that repelled the cold blasts of winter winds, and formed an equally agreeable protection in the days of summer's excessive heat; and, mad and rash as the project was, I determined to go down, by the evening mail, to the nearest inn, find my way to Mr. Hindley's house, and secrete myself somewhere in the shrubs, trusting that

fortune would smile upon my plan, and that I should be rewarded by a sight of my darling Clara, in the early morning, and be able to get away undiscovered, after my desire had been gratified.

The next question was, how was I to account for my absence to my wife? I told her that I was going into the country to see a friend, who was, as I believed, extremely ill, and that I should certainly not be back till the next day. I was decidedly wrong in having recourse to an excuse which would not bear examination. In fact, I cannot help regretting that I should have been guilty of stooping to subterfuge, because, as the motto to this chapter implies, its subject-matter relates to the question of truth and falsehood.

My wife put no difficulty in the way of my project, and, luckily, asked me no questions. She reminded me that we were to spend the evening with the Straffords. I asked her to make my apologies for me, and told her that I saw no reason why she should not go if she liked. Having instructed

her to take care of herself, I wished her good-bye, and set out on my expedition.

It is an astonishing thing how true it is, that, in many cases, second thoughts prove themselves superior to first ones. If one has to write a letter of displeasure, and puts pen to paper, without due consideration, one is almost sure to say too much, and regret it the next day. Propose to a young lady on the spur of the moment, without forethought, and, in all probability, you will, on reflection, wish you hadn't done it. Make a hasty purchase, without deliberating whether you really like or want the object in question, ten to one, you will be sorry that you did not previously think a little.

No sooner had I started, than second thoughts came to my aid. Fortified with the sage counsel that they volunteered to me, I quickly came to the conclusion that I had embarked on an injudicious errand, where the chances were very much against me; and that if I gained what I had proposed to myself as the end of my expedition, I

should only be desirous of seeing Clara repeatedly again, and learning far more concerning her than I could hope to glean by carrying out this hastily-conceived plan; that the sight of her would but make me more dissatisfied than I already was, and that I should be acting unfairly and dishonourably by my wife in absenting myself from her on such pretexts as the present. Influenced by these impressions, instead of continuing my journey, I got out of the mail, after having travelled but a short distance, and waited the arrival of the up-coach to convey me back to London.

In the evening my wife went to Lady Strafford's, where she arrived in a great state of fear, in consequence of the horse having turned restive, and very nearly upset the carriage. This, coupled with the fact of my temporary absence, decided Sir Francis and Lady Strafford to press her to stay the night at their house, which, after some reluctance, she consented to do.

The next morning, on the principle that, having no one to think for her, she must think for herself,

and being anxious to be home early, my wife was up by-times, and ready to start on foot, attended by a maid, whom she asked to accompany her. She was about to leave Spring Gardens Terrace, where the Straffords resided, when Sir Francis made his appearance, and insisted on escorting her home. This she at first refused, feeling that the offer, harmless though it might be, was liable to be misinterpreted, and, if known to me, might produce an unfavourable impression. Still, as she could not give any forcible reason for refusing, and as the maid had just walked quietly on, as the footman informed his master, her scruples were overborne, and she accepted the arm of the baronet.

By this unfortunate offer Sir Francis had not only thrown my wife into confusion, but displeased his own; for on hearing of her husband's having undertaken the escort of her friend, she immediately began to question the propriety of his conduct as regarded the world, and the thoughtlessness as regarded herself. However, these were

considerations that Sir Francis had, unfortunately, omitted to think of.

Scarcely had he entered St. James's Park, with my wife on his arm, than he stumbled across the very person, of all others amongst his acquaintance, whom it was most desirable that he should not have met. It was a certain Doctor Jay, a man who was noted for attending very much more to the business of others than to his own, and was known as the most systematic male gossip about London; hence the secret of his success in business, for many an antiquated tabby, many a hypochondriacal dowager, many a scandal-loving bachelor, had found the greatest benefit from a dose of "scan mag," preferring it greatly to any other drug that could be produced from the *un*worthy M. D's. pharmacopœa.

On perceiving Sir Francis, he took especial pains not to be avoided, and stopped to make a communication to him, that, if estimated by its importance, would certainly have borne being kept to himself; but the production of it enabled

him to direct a most searching side glance upon my wife.

The impertinent look of the doctor was quite sufficient to determine her; and, abruptly leaving Sir Francis, she, with a view of extricating herself from further difficulties, said she had to call upon her milliner in Pall Mall. This project was immediately put into execution, and, taking leave of her companion, she hurried through the passage that leads to Cockspur Street. After remaining some little time at Madame Desange's, and never for a moment doubting that Sir Francis would at once return home to breakfast, she continued her walk. On reaching the entrance to the Palace, she again met her evil genius.

The moment she perceived him, the impression flashed across her mind that she had been waylaid, which, added to the disappointment, and consciousness of that very situation which she wished to avoid, concurred to cover her with a confusion it was impossible to hide. Pride and good breeding were, however, still predominant

over truth and prudence, and my wife, anxious to remove from Sir Francis's mind any suspicion of a design to shun him, or to let him suppose for a moment that she suspected him of following her, contrived, with an effort equal to that of a martyr who smiles amidst torture, to affect an air of gaiety, and talked of the wonderful destiny that had again brought them accidentally together.

By this conduct, a retreat was rendered impossible, and they walked together towards the Ambassador's Court, when one of those sudden storms, which are said to constitute an English summer—three fine days, and a deluge of rain, accompanied by lightning—compelled them to seek shelter under the archway.

In the meantime, I had returned home by the night coach; and not wishing to disturb my wife at so early an hour as four o'clock, had quietly let myself in with that bachelor's comfort, a latch-key, and laid down on the sofa in my dressing-room, until the household were stirring.

About nine o'clock, upon ringing my bell, I

heard from my servant that my wife had not returned from Lady Strafford's; and, although I had never known of the horse playing such pranks before, as the one related to me as the cause of her stay there, my first impression was that it was a very strange occurrence. After waiting half an hour, and thinking the matter over, I remembered the friendly footing my wife always seemed on with the Baronet; the old tender intimacy of other days recurred to my mind. I thought of the so-so sort of reputation that society had attached to his name, and I recollected how often I had seen him with his eyes rivetted upon her, in such a way that they might on just grounds have been accused of breaking the tenth commandment.

My imagination, of course, prompting me to see only the dark side of every probability connected with the affair, the demon of jealousy which, up to this time, left me alone in peace, suddenly made me his prey. Suspicion overpowered me. I felt that there was something wrong about the circumstances of the case; and having got the idea firmly

established within me, I determined to investigate the matter.

Accordingly I took my hat, and hurried off to Lady Strafford's house. On my arrival, I was informed by the servant, in a manner that I thought seemed confused and suspicious, that my wife was gone out, but that Lady Strafford was at home. I sent word to say that I was below, and anxious to see her. When she came down, I discovered that she had been in tears, and my fear conquered every other feeling. I was in a state of alarm that she had something serious to impart to me, judging by her extremely nervous manner; but I soon learnt that my wife and Sir Francis had left the house some hours before my arrival, and that he had not yet returned.

Lady Strafford, upon hearing from me that Mrs. Carlton had not reached Wilton Place, had her suspicions confirmed; and in her jealousy, which, for fear of the consequences, she laboured to conceal, I found, unhappily, new cause for my own. I determined, however, to wait with as much

calmness as possible till the Baronet came in. Perhaps two persons were never more embarrassed by the presence of each other.

While breakfast was getting ready, Dr. Jay came to pay Lady Strafford a morning visit, and, to the unspeakable relief of both of us, was immediately admitted. The doctor saw that Lady Strafford was low-spirited, and made several attempts to divert her, by recounting an *escapade* that had lately been discovered in a house not a hundred miles (as he gently insinuated) from Portman Square. In this, however, he failed, and was then obliged to have recourse to his usual remedy of sal volatile and water, or camphor julep.

"By the way," continued this chatterer, "I met Sir Francis with a fair friend this morning under the archway of St. James's Palace. The lady's face was so enveloped in a dark veil that I could not recognise her features."

The doctor, perceiving that this speech was received with emotions far from friendly, added,

"It might be his sister, for she was elegantly dressed, and seemed to be on the most affectionate terms."

These particulars confirmed the doubts in both Lady Strafford's mind and my own; and the mischief-maker, finding that his satirical essays were not as popular as usual, took his leave. He was met at the door by Sir Francis, who brought him back. His presence, however insignificant, imposad some restraint upon the rest of the company; and I, in as collected a manner as I could assume, asked the Baronet what he had done with my wife.

He, with some irresolution, replied—"That he had walked to Spring Gardens Passage with her, and that she had there parted with him, with a view of calling at her milliner's in Pall Mall."

I cast upon him a most searching look, full of disbelief and suspicion. Sir Francis, who little thought that the doctor had followed his footsteps, and knew nothing of the remark that had fallen from him respecting his having been seen with my

wife at St. James's, judged by appearances that it was better thus indirectly to tell a falsehood by concealing the truth from his wife and myself; he supposed, indeed, that even if I made inquiries at Madame Desanges's, as they did not go or leave there together, no discovery could be made; and as it would not follow that they had afterwards met, he left her to account for her proceedings as she thought fit, taking for granted that what he had concealed she would also conceal, for the same reason; or if she did not, as he had affirmed nothing contrary to truth, that he might pretend to have kept it back in jest.

The moment I received this intelligence, which confirmed my worst fears, I took my leave, with every appearance of satisfaction, and was followed by the doctor.

No sooner were Sir Francis and Lady Strafford alone, than she questioned him with great earnestness about the lady whom he had been seen with at the Palace. When he was told that this incident had been related in my presence, he was

greatly alarmed, lest my wife should increase my suspicions by attempting to conceal that which by a series of inquiries from one and the other, or from Doctor Jay, might be easily arrived at, or perhaps even be heard of by accident from some one who might have met us during the latter part of our walk. In order to pacify Lady Strafford's mind, and obtain her assistance—I fear the latter feeling preponderated—he told her all that had happened, and his serious apprehension of the consequences; he also urged her to go secretly to the milliner's, and to find some way of acquainting my wife with her danger, and admonish her to conceal nothing.

Lady Strafford was now convinced of her husband's sincerity, not alone by the advice he had urged her to give my wife, but by the consistency of the story, and the manner in which he was affected. Her jealousy was changed into pity for her friend, and apprehension for her husband. She hastened to Madame Desange's, and learnt that I had just been there, and that all that the worthy milliner knew was, that my Mrs. Carlton

had paid her a hurried visit, unaccompanied by any one.

Thinking it possible that I might not go directly home, Lady Strafford wrote a letter to her friend to the following effect :—

"My dearest Emily,

"I am in the utmost distress for you. Your husband, I fear, has suspicions which truth on your part can alone remove. It would be useless of me to attempt to conceal from you that I considered it indiscreet of you to accept my husband's arm, when you left our house; but I do not wish to blame you for doing what you may have looked upon as harmless. Mr. Carlton has heard from Dr. Jay that you took shelter from the storm with him under the archway at St. James's, he has also since called at Madame Desange's, from whence I write; he knows that you came here and went away alone, and that your stay was short, but how to account for the second meeting with Sir Francis I know not.

"I, my dear friend, am perfectly satisfied that it was purely accidental; I hope, therefore, that this will reach you in time enough to prevent your withholding from your husband the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It would have been better if Mr. Carlton had known nothing, for then you would not have been suspected; but unjust as those suspicions are, he must now know all, or you cannot be cleared.

"Forgive the freedom with which I write, and believe me your most affectionate,

"MARIA STRAFFORD."

"P.S.—I have ordered the bearer to say he came from Watkins', the stationers."

The above letter was given to a street sweeper (for that useful body of men the commissionaires were not then in existence), and he was ordered to say that he brought it from the booksellers in Cockspur Street, for fear that if it were known that it came from Lady Strafford, and should by accident fall into my hands, my curiosity might

prompt me to read it, and question my wife, without communicating to her the contents.

Convinced that I had been the dupe of a profligate seducer, by the answer which I had received from the doctor, I went home immediately. My wife had returned shortly after I had left, and had not recovered from the confusion and dread that had seized her when she heard that I had come to town early in the morning. Anticipating the consequences of her indiscretion, she gave way to the most bitter reflections, and was only called to a state of consciousness when she heard my well-known knock at the door.

Revenge had taken such possession of my breast, that I could not look upon her distress with compassion, because I firmly believed it to proceed from the consciousness of guilt; I turned deadly pale, my lips quivered, my limbs shook, my voice faltered, as I asked, in as calm a tone as I could command,

"Where have you been since you left Lady Strafford's?"

With a throbbing heart, and tears rolling down her cheeks, which she attempted in vain to suppress, she told me that she had proceeded to Madame Desange's after leaving Sir Francis in the park, near Spring Garden Passage.

She had not fortitude to relate the sequel, but stopped, with some appearance of irresolution and terror.

I then asked if she had walked straight home and alone from the milliner's. This question, and the tone in which it was put, increased her confusion, for she felt that in keeping back part of her narrative, she had involved herself in dissimulation; but the past could not be recalled, and she was led on from equivocation to falsehood.

Anxious to arrive at the truth, I gave her to understand that I had been no farther than the immediate neighbourhood. Encouraged by my manner, amidst a crowd of tumultuous reflections, she proceeded to affirm, that, on leaving Madame Desange's, she had walked home unattended.

This falsehood was uttered with such evident marks of guilt and shame, that I no more doubted her infidelity than I did her existence; for the story completely tallied with that of Sir Francis'; and as one had concealed the truth, and the other denied it, I could only arrive at one conclusion, which was, that there was a perfect understanding between them. My resolution was made up in a second, and, determining to lose no time in bringing Sir Francis to account, I turned abruptly away and immediately left the house.

At the door I met the messenger, who had been despatched by Lady Strafford to my wife, and fiercely interrogating him as to his business, the man produced the letter, saying, as he had been ordered, that it came from Watkins, the stationer's. Upon this I snatched it from him, and, muttering some expressions of rage and resentment, thrust it into my pocket.

Inflamed with anger, I lost no time in writing to an old, tried, and valued friend, Colonel Ilchester, requesting him to meet me, as soon as possible,

at the Albion Hotel, Cockspur Street, having previously despatched one to Sir Francis to the same effect, for I felt that my feelings required a safety valve, so completely did they master and nearly drive me to madness.

In the meantime, my wife, dreading a discovery of the falsehood she had asserted, despatched a note to Sir Francis, in which she conjured him, as a man of honour, not to own to me, or any other person, that he had seen her after he had first left her in the park.

No sooner had the messenger returned to the milliner's, and informed Lady Strafford of what had happened to her letter, than she went home in great haste to relate the circumstance to her husband, as she felt it was of vital importance that he should know it before his interview with me; but Sir Francis had been before her, and had received my letter, and that of my wife. Proceeding to the Albion Hotel, he enquired for me, and was soon ushered into my presence.

Receiving his salutation with coolness and contempt, I, in a haughty tone, demanded whether he had seen my wife after she had left Pall Mall. Sir Francis, incensed at my manner, and deeming himself bound, in honour, to keep my wife's secret, answered, that after what he had said in the morning, no man had a right to suppose that he had done so; that to insinuate the contrary was, indirectly, to charge him with falsehood; that he was not bound to answer such questions, until they were properly explained; and that, as a gentleman, he was prepared to vindicate his honour.

Considering this reply as an equivocation and insult, and being no longer able to restrain my passion, I denounced him as a liar, a seducer, and a scoundrel, and at the same time, laying my hand-whip lightly over his shoulders, told him that in less than hour he would hear from my friend, Colonel Ilchester, and that, in the meantime, I trusted he would have no communication whatever with his wife, for fear that her suspicions of what was likely to take place might prevent a

meeting, which was now rendered indispensable by the blow I had struck.

"I pledge you my word of honour," said Sir Francis, "that I will attend implicitly to your wishes, which, under the circumstance of the case, entirely coincide with mine. Colonel Ilchester will find me at my friend, Admiral Charlton's, in the Albany, in whose hands I shall place myself."

Making a formal bow, he left the room, and, as he went out, Colonel Ilchester was announced.

The events of the morning were soon recorded, and it was arranged that I should proceed at once to the "George Inn," at Hounslow, while my second agreed to lose no time in arranging a hostile meeting with Admiral Charlton.

"By five o'clock," said he, "I hope to be with you. In the meantime, I will secure the services of a surgeon, and after what has occurred, let me impress upon your mind the propriety of being prepared for a journey to the Continent; in the

present state of feeling with respect to duelling, should death ensue, a temporary absence from England will be absolutely necessary. I will bring down the pistols with me."

Ordering a coach, I drove to my banker's, where I drew sufficient funds to meet any contingency; and then called at an outfitter's, in the Strand, to purchase whatever was requisite for the contemplated journey.

The few hours that intervened between my interview with Colonel Ilchester and the time he was to meet me at Hounslow, passed quickly away, from the excited state of mind I was in; and it was near seven o'clock before his chaise drove up to the door. Without alighting, he desired the waiter to say he was waiting to take me to the barracks. The gallant soldier had lent himself to this subterfuge with a view of deceiving the landlord, landlady, and their servants, who, attracted by the arrival of a carriage and four, had clustered about the vehicle; but he might have saved himself the trouble, for the wide-awake ostler, judging

from the parties, a weather-beaten veteran, and a well-known London surgeon, with no luggage except two small mahogany cases, which it did not require much penetration to ascertain held pistols and instruments, had already pronounced it to be an affair of honour.

"What a pity it *wore*," he sagely observed, "they didn't fight out the quarrel with *fistises*, like true-born Britons."

A remark which drew forth an emphatic assent from the first and second turn-out post-boys! men of at least five and thirty years of age.

Descending the stairs, I overheard a few sympathetic observations, which seemed to increase in warmth according to the scale in which I had remembered the speakers. The chambermaid merely gave me a shilling's worth of sympathy in the exclamation, "Poor gentleman!" "Boots," who had received double that amount, remarked, with a sigh, that he hoped sincerely he should have the pleasure of attending to me again; while the waiter, who had been half-crowned, said, "How happy he

would be to take my order for supper," adding, "that he trusted all would go well, and that I might"—I fancied he was about to say, "be spared"—when he added, "depend upon having a juicy steak and a bottle of beeswing port."

Upon entering the carriage, the post-boys were told to drive on to the barracks, but, from previous orders, they stopped short of them. Under the pretence of looking at one of the wheels, we descended, and having sent a gaping bystander for the blacksmith, gave instructions that they should wait our return. My companions, enveloped in their cloaks, carrying the weapons, and instruments to counteract any mischief that might arise from their use, and followed by me, took a path which led to a secluded part of the heath, and there we were joined by Sir Francis and Admiral Charlton.

After the usual recognitions of courtesy, the preliminary arrangements were made, and the principals took up their ground.

"At the word 'fire,'" said the Admiral, "you

will discharge your pistols simultaneously. It will be preceded by 'make ready,' when you may cock them and present. Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"We are," replied my opponent and myself; and in less than two seconds the whizzing noise of two bullets was heard, one fired in the air, the other unfortunately penetrating the breast of the destroyer of my happiness, as I then looked upon him to be.

He uttered a piercing cry as he fell backwards with his hand raised to the wound, a cry which I saw, by the countenance of the doctor, indicated serious injury. He was supported in their arms, the blood rushed copiously from his lips, and it was evident, by the working of his countenance, and the appearance of his eyes, which seemed suddenly bereft of animation, that his earthly time was short. My feelings it is impossible to describe. However, I was still so excited that I could scarcely realize the fact that I had just been instrumental in hastening a human creature to his grave. The usual restora-

tives were tried, and every attempt made to stop the blood, which flowed freely from his breast.

Presently, making a sudden struggle, in spite of the pain he was enduring, he motioned to me to kneel beside him. I did so. He wished, I saw, to speak to me. Placing my ear close to him, I waited breathlessly to hear him speak. I had, in sight of his approaching death, already forgiven him. He was, I supposed, about to confess all, and so die at peace with one whom he had grievously offended. Having made an effort that it was most heartrending to witness, and calling into forced action all the vital strength that remained in him, he said, in a voice that sounded as sepulchral as the tomb he was about to enter,

"However your wife may have been betrayed, by pride or fear, into dissimulation or falsehood, she is innocent."

He then briefly related all the circumstances as they had happened; and at last, grasping my hand, stained with his blood, urged me to escape, that I might be a friend to his widow—here the

poor fellow shed tears—and to his child, if its birth should not be prevented by the death of its father.

Yielding to the force of this appeal, I made my escape from the fatal field; and, on my way to Dover, read the letter which I had received from the messenger, and by that evening's post inclosed it in the following to my wife:

"My dear Emily,

"I am the most wretched of men, but I do not upbraid you as the cause. Would to Heaven that I was as innocent of crime as you are! We are both the victims of dissimulation and insincerity. By dissimulation, Sir Francis was induced to waste those hours with you, which he ought to have devoted to his poor unhappy wife. Trusting in your own integrity, you allowed him, whom you wished to shun, to join you in the park. By detecting dissimulation in Sir Francis, my suspicions were increased, and your falsehood, unhappily, confirmed them. Oh, Emily, Emily! Before this sheet reaches you, you will

know what has occurred! Oh! how can I look in the face the miserable position in which I am placed! Poor Sir Francis declared you innocent—you whom I had no right to suspect, no reason to believe capable of deceiving me! What a life of misery is before me! How can I ever expect forgiveness from poor Lady Strafford—I, who have deprived her of an honourable husband, and rendered the child, to which she is about to give birth, fatherless ere it come into the world.

"Oh, Emily, Emily! how can we ever meet again? Nothing that I can now say can atone for the crime that I have committed. Cowardly it may be, but I am about to escape from a land whose law, in such a case as mine, expects life for life, but the future that is before me—a fugitive—marked with the brand of the murderer Cain, is too dreadful to contemplate calmly. What fate—what punishment could be more terrible?

"What excuse can I make to you, my dear wife? But anything I can say is too late. Henceforth

you must despise me. Return to your parents, and cease to think of one who suspected you as I did.

"Adieu! I have no time for more. The boat is about to start. I dare not delay my departure till the next packet. I know not what I have written to you. Adieu! Your unhappy

"GEORGE CARLTON.

"P.S.—Sir F. begged me to convey his last blessing to his wife. Let her see this."

CHAPTER IX.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow:
Rase out the written troubles of the brain;
And with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

SHAKESPEARE.

"MESSIEURS et Mesdames, descendez, diner," "Messieurs et Mesdames, descendez, diner," shouted a French waiter of a very provincial cut, as the diligence from Calais drew up at the Hôtel du Lion d'Or at Beauvais; "Messieurs et Mesdames, descendez, diner," he continued, in a twang as peculiar as that of an itinerant vendor of street merchandise in any European capital.

Some of the passengers understood what the words meant, and descended accordingly; to others the intelligence sounded like so much gibberish, but they alighted all the same, and followed their leader into the restaurant of the Lion d'Or. Corpulent parties, in the rough-and-ready raiment peculiar to the traveller, took the first opportunity of stretching their arms and legs, and disencumbering themselves of a portion of their fatigue by indulging in a hearty yawn ere they sat down to restore themselves.

There was a Queen's messenger, enveloped in a tumbled surtout, with bulky leather bags slung round his person, and wearing so many straps that, in case of accident, he looked all ready for amputation. But then he had a long journey before him, on his Majesty's service, and without all his trappings he would have looked like an ordinary traveller.

There was a large English family, who had just crossed for the first time, and were not quite sure whether they were in France or Belgium; but the

weather-beaten-looking papa at their head was parleying with the waiter in the worst of French, touching the price of four "potages," five rolls, and two mutton cutlets—which miscellaneous lot of provisions had been ordered or consumed by the family, according to the several appetites of its various members, for the passage from Dover, which they had undergone but a few hours before, had been a very bad one; and the two unhappy-looking ladies, with the black reticules and the saffron complexions, had had such a rough time of it, that they could touch nothing but a glass of the pure liquid.

Not so, however, the great pink-featured German Baron Rheimengine, in the cotton-braided coat and the Icelandish cap. He, too, has suffered severely during the passage, but is rapidly coming-to over a large Bologna, masticating most industriously against time, for the diligence only stops a quarter of an hour.

There were two Irish M.P.'s fraternising with an Italian nobleman, and comparing their own

country's imaginary grievances with the more real ones of their newly-made acquaintance. Then there was a butcher from Brussels, a very fat priest, and a French gentleman of large landed property, and extensive proportions, who had been out of temper all the way. The fact is, that, as he was a rich man, and could afford to be comfortable, he had charged a waiter at Calais to take two places in the diligence for him, so that he might have plenty of room, instead of being elbowed on either side all the way to Paris; and the "animal" of a waiter, as the gentleman called him, had been and engaged one place inside and one outside the conveyance, which two places he had been obliged to pay for, without being able to derive any advantage from the luxury.

They are a very fair lot of diligence passengers, looking at them not collectively but individually. I do not know that they would command more attention than would any wild beast taken at a venture from a travelling menagerie, and exhibited by itself. But there are three more who I am not

going to pass over thus cursorily, because they have a more particular claim upon my pen.

First of all, nobody could help remarking an elderly emaciated lengthy lady, merely from her singularly sinewy appearance. Then she was dressed in the very scantiest of scanty fashions, insomuch that I really believe, without exaggeration, that all that she had on might have been packed up in such a way as to occupy no more space in a French gentleman's game-bag than that required for a good-sized hare.

Mrs. Middleton, for such was her name, had appeared in the hotel-books upon the Continent for many years; and her peculiar appearance was as well known to the proprietors, as is Galignani's cleverly condensed newspaper, or Murray's hand-book. She was accompanied by one of the leanest daughters ever shipped and chaperoned away from the mother country.

Miss Middleton, for she *was* a "Miss" still, although she was already something considerably

beyond thirty, was nearly as classical about the petticoats as her meagre mamma, but then she was more modern-looking in other respects. Not that she wore a hat, because, in those days, young ladies had not become so "gentlemanlike" as they now are, with their stiff collars and cloth clothing, and spacious pockets, and Garibaldi jackets, and knowing-looking hats (such as any gentleman might wear should he be so disposed), adorned either by a tuft of golden plumage plucked from the breast of a masculine pheasant, or by a rosette of dahlia proportions, or even by a whole bird stuffed, within the precincts of the hat's brim.

Miss Middleton's head-covering was not a hat, and yet it could hardly be called a bonnet. It was a sort of compromise between the two, that few women then would have had the courage to wear. It was not a hat, because it was not worn flat upon the head, and its front was bent somewhat over the forehead in the form of a bonnet-shade, whilst the back part was turned up something like a

turkey's tail. It was attached round the neck by a silken band; moreover it was ornamented by a chain of laurel leaves running round it, which gave a sort of victorious air to the wearer.

Wherever it was made, and whoever was its architect, it could scarcely be called a work of beauty, and certainly no one, with an antipathy to being remarkable, would have ventured to put it on; but the wearer who had long ago given up all hope of attracting in any other way, had adopted eccentricity of toilette as a sort of off-hand resource, and when she saw men staring at her, as they naturally would when she wore anything so peculiar, by an easy illusion of personal vanity, she would imagine that her observers were engaged in contemplating her own natural charms.

Her features were decidedly plain, and yet the *tout ensemble* was not repulsive. She was excessively tall, and her figure was rather graceful than otherwise. She was hardly ever seen without two

or three large books under her arm, which encumbrance, as she imagined, led people to suppose that she was one of the superior women of the new era, who fancy that they are about to astonish the world by their enlightened ideas; but this was by no means Miss Middleton's ambition. She only desired to be thought literary and clever, as a means conducive to the great end of matrimony; for, as she had long lost confidence in the power of her personal charms, she was now concentrating all her efforts upon the chance of catching some one who might be inclined to marry her, provided he was satisfied with her intellectual attainments; consequently, she always took care that the decoy books which she carried with her should be upon some abstruse subject of which she understood little, and she paraded them before all the learned-looking young men she approached.

For the last ten or twelve years had she been in search of a husband, and nearly every year had she hunted over some fashionable tract or other of the Continent, but, as yet, without success.

Now, she would run through all the likely parts of France; on another occasion it would be Germany and the Rhine; Spain, Switzerland, Italy, had all been tried, and had all drawn blank. The field which she had last selected was Switzerland. She had gone most vigorously to work. For more reading parties had taken up their quarters in that country at this time than was usual for the season of the year. There were "double firsts" scattered in all directions about the various cantons, and there were more "senior wranglers" than chamois upon the mountains; to say nothing of wandering hordes of improving-looking curates, who were likely enough to ripen, some day, into full-grown bishops, or other church luminaries.

This was the class of men upon whom Miss Middleton had made up her mind to try her experiment; immediately on her arrival in the country, she had to make the most of her time, and of her opportunities. She would walk into the reading-rooms of the hotels and pensions, where she was staying as collectedly as the boldest of her male

compatriots, to look at the papers, consult atlases, or read a Zauchnitz edition of some popular English work. Still this was only make-believe. Her real object was to get into conversation, with the object of becoming acquainted with some one or other of the above mentioned, whom she would compel to talk to her, however little inclined he might be, whilst that poor deplorable-looking object, her mother, too used-up-looking to be anything more than the most passive of ciphers, was left to her own devices, and to take care of herself; nevertheless, Miss Middleton was wont to profess the wildest affection for her parent in public.

Going up mountains, the young lady would invariably charge her mule with attempting to upset her over a precipice, at the very moment that some young Englishman was passing, and seeing a timid-looking woman in difficulties, so far from home, how could he act otherwise than rush forward and offer his services. These were always accepted gracefully, and the next time she met him, on some

quiet Alpine pass, she would clap her hands with a simplicity, in character and keeping with the beauties of nature that surrounded them, and would stop and talk so long, and appear so surprisingly amiable, that her victim was pretty sure to arrive too late to catch the *table d'hôte* at the next halting place, to which he was hurrying.

On board a lake-steamboat she was here, there, and everywhere, talking to the captain, or trying to draw out some fresh arrival; or else she would be consulting her books, seemingly in connection with some particular bit of scenery, and taking notes, apparently, respecting it. In reality she was only writing down the various routes which she had overheard different men say they were going to take, with a view to following them, if it seemed worth the trouble.

It was impossible to be many hours in the same town where she was without remarking her, and extremely difficult, even for the most retiring disposition, to escape making her acquaintance. She

was certainly clever, and could talk a little on almost any subject; but, then, she had an advantage over other people, because, whatever she said could not well be lost, as she gave it utterance in such a loud key, that it was sure to be heard by more people than those for whom it was intended.

She read up an English translation of "Plato's Republic," on purpose to be able to talk philosophy with a Christ-Church student, whom she met at Lucerne; and even ventured into "Butler's Analogy." She perused a copy of Alison at Geneva, in order to display it under the nose of a Balliol-man, who was going in for honours in history, to show him that her taste soared far above the light literature of trashy novels, that her mind was fed on far more nourishing provisions than that of romances, and she deluded herself with the idea that, by feigning a passion for Alison, and by exhibiting a tendency to cram herself with it, she must assuredly be reducing the odds against her becoming the better-half of an historical first.

Then she would rattle politics to a politician, with such an easy fluency and apparently well-grounded information on various matters, that her audience could not possibly fail to feel, that if ever the ruler of Great Britain should take a fancy to a prime minister in petticoats, she would be decidedly the right woman in the right place.

She would talk metaphysics to a metaphysician; and if, by chance, she met a doctor, she would tell him a thing or two about the sanitory condition of the Swiss people, or converse with him on some such topic which she might consider suited to his comprehension.

But this is, generally speaking, a mistaken policy to adopt. There is nothing people hate so much as to be reminded perpetually of the business which they are compelled to follow, or of the station in life to which they have been called. The boy, home for the holidays, can't bear being questioned about his school. Naval men, who come ashore for a few weeks diversion after a tedious cruise, prefer any subject of conversation to nauti-

cal matters. And when the young gentleman in a London office, who is allowed to lay down his pen for a few weeks during the year and ruralise, is asked by a provincial young lady whether it does not tire him to sit all day on a stool, he cannot help considering his fair acquaintance something of a bore.

Miss Middleton was hardly to be called a flirt, in the common acceptation of the word, but whenever she got hold of a man she always talked with the object of fascinating by her language, and showing off her learning. People, in general, who did not comprehend her game, looked upon her as a mere chatterer; and ladies, who, of course, disapproved of her as being forward and odious, and far too indelicate in mingling with men, and forming acquaintance with strangers, who might be anybody for all she knew, and becoming hand and glove with fresh comers, whether they liked it or not, just regarded her as "a creature," and would have nothing to do with her.

Poor Mrs. Middleton, who couldn't stand being

dragged about for ever, was obliged, every now and then, to return home, and go through a few weeks gentler exercise at Brighton, Ryde, Ramsgate, or some such place.

Where was to be the field of her next exploits was still undecided. If there was a probability of any number of fishing parties in Norway, Miss Middleton meant to go there. If there was likely to be a large exodus to the East, she would turn steps in that direction. As yet she had only taken tickets for Paris, where, upon arrival, she intended to decide the question, where next?

Here she was now at Beauvais, taking care of her mother, coaxing her to eat a *fillet de bœuf*, and, at the same time, taking a bird's-eye survey of all the travellers, who were nearly all of them, like herself, just come from England, and on their way to Paris. In a very few seconds she had scanned them all over, and was about to dismiss them from her thoughts as a hopeless lot, when her eye suddenly lit upon the form of a young man, evidently, by his look English, who,

instead of sitting down and making the most of his time, was pacing to and fro the restaurant, in the most frantic way, with his arms folded, his hat over his eyes, and taking no notice whatever of any of his fellows.

Where had she seen that face before?—who was he?—who could he be, that she had so absurdly forgotten?—were the questions that she put to herself. Then a waiter starts forth in hot pursuit after him, as he walked backwards and forwards down the room, and endeavoured to stop him with,

"Monsieur will take some potage?" "Would monsieur like a *fillet de bœuf tout chaud?*"

But to neither invitation did he get any answer.

The young man continued his hurried march, but the waiter ceased to persevere in making overtures to him, and went off to serve some one else, muttering to himself, "*Il est fou, ce monsieur là!*"

And there is very little doubt that there was some truth in the remark, for the young man

presently began talking to himself in the most excited way—now raising his arm and knitting his brow, first slackening speed, as if he was coming to a standstill, then tearing away faster than before, and muttering, inaudibly, words of apparently dreadful import.

Then he began to look wilder than he had yet done, but this scene was lost upon the great body of waters and drinkers. No one perceived him, save one, and that was Miss Middleton. She had seen and heard everything. Suddenly memory, too, came to her aid. It was a Mr. Carlton. She remembered having met him in Germany. Yes, it was him! She recollected that she had had great difficulty in getting to know him, and she had even fancied that he had had the singular taste not to like her; but that was a trifle now, and not worth remembering.

Directly she had made out who the stranger was, she darted from her chair towards him, addressed him by name, and shook him by the hand, before he had noticed her approach. Fixing his

eyes upon her with a most unnaturally wild stare, he began an incoherent exclamation. The sentence was drowned by the sudden announcement of the conducteur that time was up.

Passengers of every description hurried to take their places—some in the interieur, some in the coupé, some in the banquette. Miss Middleton had to pay the addition, and hustle her mother into the coupé; not, however, before she had learnt from Mr. Carlton, who was a banquette passenger, that he was going to Paris, and had requested the conducteur to see him safe to his place, and minister to him during the remainder of the journey.

The long tedious route from Beauvais to Paris was performed without any incident of importance; but, on the way, Miss Middleton passed the time in musing over her strange meeting, thinking of Mr. Carlton's extraordinary behaviour, the mysterious sentence which she had overheard him address to himself, and she could not help wondering what on earth he could mean by the language he had used. Anyhow, it would be un-

charitable, under the circumstances, to think of leaving him. On that point there was no question. She had always liked him, and if he had manifested a dislike to her in times gone by, that was no reason why he should do so now.

She could not but see that he was hardly himself. His look was so much more vacant than usual, and it was so unlike him to make himself conspicuous in the way he certainly had done. It could hardly be the consequence of sea-sickness from which he was suffering.

The more she conjectured the more bewildered she became. She had heard nothing of him since she had last seen him in Germany. There he appeared always most rational and quiet, here he seemed so very different. What could have happened in the interim to make such an altered being of him? She determined to know all as soon as it was possible.

At length the domes and elevated buildings of Paris appeared in sight. Even the villages, as they drew nearer the French metropolis, began to

look less rustic, and the peasantry less provincial. The horses had been changed for the last stage already some time. The Arc de Triomphe was plainly discernible, and the heights of Mont-Martre all at once appeared in view, acting as an encouraging beacon to the fatigued inmates of the great yellow diligence.

"I can see Napoleon standing with his arms crossed and his cocked hat on," said one of the Irish M.P.'s in the banquette, who, with the aid of some powerful glasses, was spying out everything before other people.

"Och! murther! what, by the powers, can he be doing, so late in the afternoon, wandering about Paris?" remarked the other M.P. "I hope there is no revolution going on," and he crossed himself several times as he spoke.

"Och! it's only his statue I'm spaking of, stuck up in the centre of Paris," replied the Irishman with the telescope; which exclamation seemed to relieve his friend amazingly.

Then the weather-beaten father of a family, in

the inside, put his shaggy head out of the window, and holloed to the conducteur, swearing his hair was almost wet through, owing to some water continually dripping on to his head from a globularly shaped object suspended above him. A large cloth was wrapped round it, and water kept falling, drop by drop, at every shake of the vehicle.

"Conducteur! Conducteur! my head is tout à fait humide!" cried the poor gentleman, as loud as he could bawl.

"Soyez tranquille," holloed the pink-faced German, putting his head also out of the back compartment of the carriage. "Ce n'est que des boissons rouges qui m'abbartient." Then, seeing that the plaintiff was an Englishman, he corrected himself as follows:—"Bardon, Bardon! it is only some gold fishe that are mine."

"Then why the devil haven't you got them hung up over your own head?" cried the Englishman, in an excited tone.

"We are close to Baris now," explained the German. "It is only gold fishe."

A sudden lurch which the diligence took, swung the cloth-enveloped case hard against the roof of the carriage, smashing the glass into atoms; and down came a regular deluge of water, all over the unfortunate gentleman's back, wetting him completely. The children screamed. There was a regular commotion. The diligence stopped. The German, fearing something had happened, was quickly on the spot.

"Oh! my poor boissons rouges," he exclaimed, as he endeavoured to extricate them from the fragments of broken glass with which they were surrounded.

The Englishman seized the poor German by the neck, swearing he would have his revenge; and would have throttled him, for he kept getting redder every moment that he was held, had not the conducteur parted them. The former had had his coat rubbed down, discharging all the time rounds of abusive language at his enemy. The German carried his gasping pets into an auberge close by, and returned triumphantly to his place,

carrying a large saucepan, full of water, which he had purchased from the innkeeper, and into which he had committed his boissons rouges. For the remainder of the journey he took care to carry them on his lap, for fear of a second accident befalling them.

At length Paris was reached. There was no mistaking it, for the driver began cracking his whip in earnest from right to left, and from left to right, not in the lazy, careless sort of way that that operation had been performed as the diligence rumbled along through provincial towns, but in a sharp excited manner, that could be heard from one end of the street to the other, causing a wide berth to be made by the smaller Paris vehicles, in order to give the rattling diligence room to pass.

All the passengers seemed delighted at the idea that this long journey was at an end. The Irish M.P.'s in the banquette forgot the calamities of their country in the anticipation of a good dinner and a sparkling libation, in honour of ould

Ireland, St. Patrick, and themselves. The two ladies with the black bags, and the sufferings of the condemned on their countenances, who had slept through the fish *fracas* and the whole of the last three stages, began arranging their dishevelled locks with a pocket-comb. The English paterfamilias recovered from his humidity and the excitement thereby occasioned; the pink German nursed his saucepan with Teutonic cheerfulness; the fat French propriétaire ceased to regret the reckless expenditure of francs necessitated by the stupidity of the "animal" at Calais, who had so injudiciously selected his two seats for him; and in fact all the passengers, whether they had been suffering from cramp, exhausted nature, or the restlessness of their neighbours, forgot their troubles in the expectation of the approaching happy issue out of all their grievances.

Presently the whip-cracking suddenly ceased, the diligence came to a full stop, the driver descended, the conducteur opened the door of every compartment of the vehicle, and "all the world" alighted.

But they were not yet free agents—there were the officers of the octroi to be satisfied. Everybody was ordered into the temporary confinement of a waiting-room, where they were obliged to make themselves as happy as they could, till it pleased the consequential collectors of customs to receive the passengers into their august presence, and enable them to redeem their luggage and allow them to depart.

Miss Middleton having deposited her mother safely in a corner, began searching among the crowd for the mysterious being who had occupied so much of her thoughts during the latter part of her journey from Calais. At length, just as she had come to the conclusion that he must have been left behind, or had deceived her as to his destination, she saw him pushed into the waiting-room by two guiding spirits, and look around vacantly, as if unconscious of where he was, or what he was doing. She advanced towards him, and speaking in her usual loud key, which compelled him partially to collect his thoughts, she told him

that she really thought he must have stopped somewhere else, as he had been so long in making his appearance.

On finding himself spoken to, he seemed to shudder visibly, as he turned his head mechanically round in the direction whence the voice came. Fastening his eye in an earnest, but unmeaning way upon her, he suffered himself to consider her for a few seconds; then, as if suddenly starting from a dream, he exclaimed in a nervous tone, "Don't leave me! don't leave me!" and appeared as if he were about to say something more, when the doors were flung open which connected the waiting-room with the *salle de baggage.*

All was hurry, scurry, and confusion in an instant, everybody desirous to be the first to escape, now that the period of temporary captivity was over, and forgetful of everything else in their anxiety to set eyes upon their goods and chattels. Miss Middleton had to rush to the rescue of her mother, who had been carried away by the crowd. Every gentleman and lady was called upon for

their *billets de baggage*, and the usual peremptory inquiry, as to whether they had anything to declare, compelled one and all to fix their attention upon the business before them, of releasing their property from the hands of the officials.

Then followed the customary scrimmaging for conveyances. The Middletons had just been "passed," and were being hurried by an officious commissionaire into a fiacre; but mademoiselle had no intention of quitting till she had seen after her apparently helpless friend. She felt certain that, from what she had seen of him, he was deserving of attention; and as he had asked her not to leave him, whatever might have been his motive, she was determined to accede to his request. Where could he be?

Most of the travellers had gone already, having settled their differences with the douane and octroi people, and carried away their effects. Presently her eye caught sight of the gentleman at the far end of the room, surrounded by a company of royal "blues," who were all simultaneously insisting on

the production of his billet, which persecuting demand he seemed unwilling to satisfy, and looked as if he was about to resent it as a piece of unnecessary impertinence; but Miss Middleton, who felt convinced that however short a time it might be going to last, he *must* certainly be labouring under a slight aberration of mind, and knowing full well that French officials are by no means notorious at the best of times for patience in cases where resistance is offered, and that luckless individuals who oppose them are very liable to find themselves treated with much less politeness than they probably bargained for, flew towards the spot where the scene was being enacted.

"Mr. Carlton!" she exclaimed, addressing him, "you are forgetting to give up your ticket."

Then turning towards the douaniers, she said,

"Messieurs, c'est un Anglais, j'espère—" and she was going to proceed, but those great men seemed already satisfied with the explanation.

"Ah! bah!" they muttered to each other, "if he is an Englishman, there is nothing extra-

ordinary in his behaviour perhaps."—"Il y'en a de si droles!" remarked the captain of the band, in a dry way, and with a shrug of the shoulders.

At length the missing receipt was found, the luggage sent away with the usual chalk mark affixed to it, its owner following it to the driver, to whom Miss Middleton, before she rejoined her mother, who was now waiting in a hackney coach close by, gave the following direction:—

"Hotel de Lille et Albion, Rue St. Honoré."

"Bien," replied the man, and addressing his horses in language that would have been perfectly unintelligible to English ones, he proceeded to obey his orders, and drove off, closely pursued by the rumbling vehicle which contained Mrs. Middleton and her daughter.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

00023765

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018